

Final Report

Analysis of Foundational Learning and Implications for Northern Alberta

Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse

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Executive Summary

I. Study Background

This engagement was commissioned by the Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse, a consortium of four colleges (Grande Prairie Regional College, Keyano College, Portage College and Northern Lakes College) and the Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC).

The primary objective was to explore and analyze models, programs, trends and other innovations of foundational learning, and to make recommendations regarding those that might be viable to be considered or adapted in whole or in part as solutions to addressing the problem by stakeholders in Northern Alberta (including individuals, families, K-12 educational institutes, postsecondary institutes, other organizations and associations, employers and other levels of government).

The project was completed over the period late June to late October, 2012 and entailed two principal phases or components:

- Activities in the initial phase of the project were associated with gaining a better understanding of the dynamics of the problems and opportunities and major components included a review of relevant statistics and trends, an analysis of K-12 student performance associated with Achievement and Diploma Test results and other “performance” factors monitored by Alberta Education and School Boards, and a review of occupational supply and demand for non-professional occupations and their associated skills requirements. These findings were later augmented with a higher level analysis of the barriers faced by students in remote, rural and northern locations in accessing educational opportunities and the policies and positions of the Governments of Alberta and Canada.
- The primary phase of the project had three sub-components. A comprehensive model review explored issues related to program design and delivery, expanding capacity and developing pathways, solutions to financial issues, promising emerging research and a broader and higher level review of the systems, procedures, and policies of Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Norway. A business case was developed to support the need for additional foundational learning. Finally, telephone interviews were held with expert relevant stakeholders to validate findings and develop a broader understanding of issues, needs and potential solutions.

This report should be viewed as a “starting point”. Due to the project’s scope and available budget, readers and users need to be mindful of a number of limitations, as summarized below:

- The report makes use of 2006 Census data (2011 is still not fully available for some categories and subjects) and School Board data for which there are minor inconsistencies with the boundaries of the NADC region, although they do not have a material impact on findings and conclusions.
- The number of successful interviews (13) is relatively small, and while comments are valuable, it is sometimes difficult to deduce trends.
- Finally, data readily available within the public domain (for the discussion and analysis of models for example) is rarely specifically focused on the unique needs of Northern Alberta and judgment has been required in terms of how it is used for this project.

II. Preliminary Supporting Research

From the research of the Primary phase, a number of factors of relevance are highlighted below.

Select Socioeconomic Factors

Key findings include:

- Generally the composition of the NADC region population is younger than the rest of the province. Northern Alberta has a smaller proportion of its population in the older age categories (i.e. 60 years plus) compared to the balance of the province (10.9% compared to 15.2%). Conversely, the Northern Alberta has a higher proportion of children and young adults under the age of 20 compared to the balance of the province (31.3% compared to 25.9%).
- The NADC region has a substantially higher proportion of persons with Aboriginal identity than the rest of the province (18.0% vs. 4.5%).
- The NADC region has similar total proportions of employment and unemployment as the rest of Alberta. However, the rate of unemployment in many of the smaller communities within the NADC region is significantly higher than the larger communities. This is evidenced by the average unemployment rate for NADC communities being 13% as compared to 5% for communities outside the NADC.
- The NADC region had a substantially higher proportion of persons 25-64 years old who had not obtained a certificate, diploma or degree as compared to the rest of Alberta (23.5% compared to 14.7%).
- The NADC region has a substantially smaller proportion of immigrants than the rest of the province (6.3% compared to 17.5%). However, there is some evidence of a growing need for foundational learning among these individuals, family members and other temporary foreign workers.

Barriers Faced by Foundational Learning Students

Key barriers include:

- **Educational Planning**— lack of awareness regarding options and costs and prerequisites and poor study skills.
- **Socio-Cultural Barriers** – reluctance to leave “home”, poor mentors or role models, mismatched aspirations, and difficulty “fitting in” with learning styles and institutional culture.
- **Physical Barriers** –there is a higher propensity for individuals with poor foundational skills to be “handicapped” and in general, there is a lack of reliable, regular and affordable transportation.
- **Childcare** – lack of quality, reliable and affordable childcare.
- **System Gaps** – lack of technology supports and continuity between systems, especially when there have been delays.
- **Costs** – not covered by some programs, cut backs in supports for disabled, cumbersome and confusing financial support system, eligibility issues for some on-reserve individuals and limits on amounts otherwise available, and higher than “average” costs for housing, transportation and food.
- **Admission criteria** - lack of recognition of prior learning gained through life and work experiences or small grade point averages or missing prerequisites.

Potential Major Policy Changes

The Government of Canada has signalled through *Action Plan 2012* that social funding mechanisms, such as social impact bonds (SIBs), with enhanced input from local stakeholders, may play a greater role in the future. (Through a SIB, a government contracts with a partner organization to deliver a particular service, with payment conditional on improvements to an associated social outcome. The delivery agency obtains funding from a private financier or philanthropic entity or other investors. If the social outcome is achieved, the social impact bondholder receives a risk-adjusted rate of return from the government, while the government saves money because the improved social outcome offsets future expenditures.)

Commensurate with the social funding policy, at this time, the Government of Canada has not indicated a level of funding or strategy for existing programs such as those associated with Sector Councils, or Skills and Partnership Fund — Aboriginal (SPF), and Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) that are scheduled to expire or be reviewed after the 2014-15 fiscal year.

Additional analysis and discussion of the preceding background factors as well existing programming and policies and positions of the Governments of Alberta and Canada is contained in Chapter 2 – Environmental Scan.

III. Student Performance

Generally speaking, according to a range of indicators including Diploma and Achievement Test results, as well as high school drop-out and transition rates, the preparedness and performance of Northern Alberta students is lower than that of students in the rest of the province, especially in areas of math and Social Studies and upon reaching the age range of 12-13. Comprehensive data and analysis at the School District and Census Division levels are presented in Chapter 3 – Summary and Analysis of Student Performance.

IV. Future Skills Requirements and Opportunities

Clear pathways to employment opportunities are important for many foundational learning students. In this regard, there are a number of occupations with skill levels that may be suitable to be integrated and contextualized to curriculums. These occupations are broken down by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada into Skill Level “C” (requiring a postsecondary certification) and Skill Level “D” (more experience oriented). In the absence of better information at the local college level, a number of occupations may have the best “prospects” for learners to obtain employment. Additional detail is presented in Chapter 4 – Occupational and Skills Analysis.

V. The Business Case for Increased Foundational Learning

There is a strong business case for increasing investment in foundational learning based upon:

- **Learning gap** - Using the proportion of individuals who do not hold high school diplomas as a surrogate of skill level, there is a fairly significant difference between the figure for Northern Alberta (33% of those over 15 years) and the figure for the balance of the province (23% of those over aged 15 years) resulting in approximately 22,000 individuals, of whom more than 52% are Aboriginals. Furthermore, the performance of primary and secondary students in Northern Alberta, as measured by Achievement Test and Grade 12 Diploma Exam results, drop-out and postsecondary transition rates and is lower than for the balance of the province, and these results likely play a strong role in deficits or weaknesses later in life.
- **Alignment with policies, goals and initiatives of the Governments of Alberta and Canada** – Both levels of government have set aggressive goals between now and 2014-15 with respect to improvements in high school completion rates, student performance, postsecondary attendance, available financial assistance for learners, economic development and greater global competitiveness, improving labour force participation and employment levels, reducing dependence on social programs, as well as gains in more efficient and cost-effective delivery of government programs and services. In some instances, separate goals have been set for FNMI individuals.
- **Economic benefits** – Improvements in educational levels are correlated strongly with reduced cost for the delivery of social and health programs, exploiting business booms and improved corporate profitability; and will be crucial to meet the projected labour force requirements (due to growth and attrition/retirement) of the oilsands and oil and gas industries given current royalty policies.
- **Direct cost-benefit** - Finally, the cost benefit analysis of expanding the foundational learning capacity of Clearinghouse Colleges by approximately 700 FLE students (representing approximately 50% of surplus capacity through to 2019) with an “investment” of \$9,000 per student and very conservative assumptions as to benefits of completion, cost sharing, earnings and productivity improvement yields a hard or direct Return on Investment of approximately 7% to government and

22% to the private sector. For the Government of Alberta, the benefits are likely to be even more significant if other reduced costs are factored in for matters such as health care and social services.

A more detailed discussion of the business case is presented in Chapter 5 – Business Case Outlining the Need for Additional Foundational Learning, which is also supported by the contents of Chapter 2 – Environmental Scan and Chapter 3 – Summary and Analysis of Student Performance.

VI. Distillation of Key Findings from Discussions with Stakeholders

Key findings include:

- Generally speaking, goals, objectives and targets for programs are not well documented and follow up mechanisms and procedures could be enhanced, and there is a need for longer-term follow-up on a “holistic” basis.
- The need for improved access to social and support services (mental health, guidance counsellors, Aboriginal elders, dealing with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder mentors, coping or life skills programming, and school nurse etc).
- Changes to content with suggestions for more “softer skills” (increasing GED requirements and adopting some European system practices) and more math, science and physics.
- More stable funding to facilitate better long range planning, integration of “soft skills” (for which many employers will not provide funding or endorse training at lower levels) and mitigation of risks associated with program development.
- Improved transportation for learners.
- Extend eligibility periods for funding provided under some Human Services programs.
- A need for more reliable outcomes reporting and information sharing.
- There may be a need for more programming effort for immigrants and temporary foreign workers.

Additional discussion and analysis is presented in Chapter 6- Summary and Analysis of Stakeholder Consultations.

VII. Model Review Findings

This discussion is broken into a number of components according to the focus of the models.

Models for Curriculum Development and Delivery

Foundational learning, especially at lower “essential skills” levels, needs to be delivered in a way that it is, tasked based, employment oriented, and contextualized around the goals, experiences (including fears) and limitations of learners, and in a way that allows learners to readily absorb and stay abreast of progress.

Models for Building Capacity and Creating Pathways

A number of models reviewed have certain aspects or features that may be worthy of more detailed review as to how aspects may be adapted or adopted to overcome barriers, optimize delivery of foundational learning to enhance the number of postsecondary learners in Northern Alberta. The existing models that may warrant greater study for utilization or adaptation (in whole or in part) include:

- Pathways to Education
- Industry Shared
- System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES)
- BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council
- Advising
- Dual Credit
- Career Pathways

- Manitoba Adult Learning Centres
- Wraparound

Each of these models is discussed and analyzed in more detail on pages 68 to 84 of Chapter 7 – Model Review.

Models to Address Financial Issues

In an era of restraint, the use of more creative financial solutions such as Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) and “pay for success” systems may be part of an array of “new and innovative” solutions.

Other financial models of interest include Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) and Incentive Bursaries or Scholarships to encourage attendance.

A more complete discussion of models to address financial issues is presented in pages 85 to 88 of Chapter 7 – Model Review.

Emerging Models or Research

The model that may hold the most promise is *Connecting Aboriginals to Manufacturing (CAM)* being undertaken by Workplace Experience Manitoba because of its holistic approach including:

- The initial counselling and assessment, which includes a holistic family approach and prepares participants to leave their home communities;
- The ongoing “wrap-around support” that is provided;
- Program content which is contextualized but highly relevant and provides participants with a credential and a strong base of skills (welding, electrical, drafting etc) to consider further education; and
- Strong employer involvement and mentoring, which has led to pathways for employment for participants.

A more complete discussion of emerging models and research is contained in pages 89 to 91 of Chapter 7 – Model Review.

Insights from Exploration of Trends and Activities in Other Countries

A number of emerging trends suggest movement toward more of a demand driven system and reward for achievement, which also argues for the need for greater emphasis on planning performance indicators and outcomes (and degree of difficulty) and the length of programs.

Both Australia and England have systems in which there are a greater number of services providers, including those from the private sector, and there might be thought of as competition for learners. Compensation (and/or the renewal of contracts to provide training services) is based on more specific achievement of goals or other indicators that are indicative of the degree of difficulty or cost in providing services, and greater emphasis will be placed on such factors when evaluating programs and determining funding.

The governance or delivery model/system in New Zealand may be worthy of exploration to determine if there are aspects that may help to improve foundational learning planning in Alberta or Northern Alberta. The New Zealand model/system has more substantial linkages between the various stakeholders that, in recognizing the complexity of the problem, may help to improve information flow and accountability. A national body with responsibility for foundational learning as well as the creation of entities with mandates for specific groups (Maori and “Pacific Islanders”) may help to better

represent the interests of these disadvantaged minorities that have rapidly growing populations (and bring the possibly a deterioration of skills, if not addressed).

A more complete discussion of trends and activities in other countries is contained in pages 92 to 106 of Chapter 7 – Model Review.

VIII. Recommendations

The principal recommendations arising from this study are summarized below.

Near-term Recommendations

The recommendations are categorized according to a number of themes or topics.

Curriculum Design and “In-Class” Delivery

1. Review policies and procedures to ensure that best practices are followed so that suitable learning atmospheres are created according to the backgrounds of individuals and that content, especially for lower skill leveled learners in programs with life skills and work place skills components is task-based and contextualized according to occupations and the backgrounds of the individuals.
2. As part of a broader strategy to improve linkages with other stakeholders, and to provide meaningful pathways to learners for engagement in the workforce, begin to consider how the skills needs and levels of difficulty for occupations, which are forecast to be in short supply, might be contextualized greater into curriculums.
3. Explore ways to enhance the effectiveness of on-line and video-conferencing approaches.

Planning and Administration

4. Begin to address potential weaknesses in the establishment of goals, performance metrics and ongoing monitoring of outcomes for programs and individuals.
5. Review existing policies and practices to address potential weaknesses in communication and information sharing among stakeholders including existing and potential learners, private sector employers and other levels of government.
6. Review existing policies and practices to explore gains that might be realized with respect to pooling of marketing, contract management, research and other related issues regarding linkages with stakeholders.

Linkages with the K-12 System

7. Explore the potential for more dual credit programming and sharing of facilities.
8. Explore to improve outcomes on Achievement and Diploma test exams, and other performance indicators such as graduation and transition rates.

Addressing Other Potentially Urgent Gaps

9. Investigate the need to consider the expansion of services to address a growing numbers of immigrants and temporary foreign workers.

10. As a temporary measure until other solutions are found (based on policy decisions), we would recommend that Clearinghouse colleges consult with other stakeholders to consider how the problems of expiration of Training for Work benefits after 30 months and inequitable funding for some First Nations learners might be resolved.

Program Funding

11. Based on the business case, it is recommended that strong consideration be given to increasing the resources available for the delivery of foundational learning programming and that planning activities take account of factors such as distance, remoteness, program complexity and administration requirements that may affect or increase costs.
12. It is recommended that the concept of an “Education Maintenance Allowance” (EMA) be considered to encourage secondary students, particularly those from low income families, to stay in school and achieve satisfactory progress.

Longer-term Recommendations

The following recommendations relate to dealing with a potential new paradigm or “landscape” that may emerge for foundational learning policy.

1. It is recommended that Clearinghouse college planners begin to become more familiar with social funding concepts and possibilities, such as Social Impact Bonds, as possible alternative to direct funding by the Government of Alberta.
2. It is recommended that Clearinghouse college planners explore ways and means (including consideration of models/systems in other countries such as New Zealand) that might facilitate more effective relationships or partnerships in the future on a continuous improvement basis.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

I. Purpose of Study

This engagement was commissioned by the Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse, a consortium of four colleges (Grande Prairie Regional College, Keyano College, Portage College and Northern Lakes College) and the Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC).

At present:

- Northern Alberta may be faced with a serious skills shortage in the foreseeable future and, that if its effects are to be minimized it will be necessary to engage the available work force more fully;
- Large parts of the available work force consist of disadvantage or disenfranchised individuals with low or poorly matched skill levels that prevent employment or pursuit higher levels of education to the same end;
- Many individuals that might be available for additional training are affected by a range of social and economic barriers;
- That many of the barriers are exacerbated by issues of remoteness and relatively small populations that preclude the “normal” economies of scale or critical masses required to provide solutions; and
- Governments, who have traditionally provided funding for such endeavors, are faced with a need for greater fiscal restraint.

Given the above, the primary objective of this engagement was to explore and analyze models, programs, trends and other innovations of foundational learning, and to make recommendations regarding those that might be viable to be considered or adapted in whole or in part as solutions to addressing the problem for affected stakeholders in Northern Alberta (including individuals, families, K-12 educational institutes, postsecondary institutes, other organizations and associations, employers and other levels of government).

For the purposes of the study, as discussed and defined in *Increasing Learner Access through System Alignment: Final Report of the Community Adult Learning Task Team, September 2010*, foundational learning “refers to the full array of learning required to bring individuals up to the equivalent of a high school graduate. Foundational learning includes literacy, English language learning, academic upgrading and preparation, high school equivalency, skills development, and employment preparation. All Comprehensive Community Institutions provide a level of foundational learning; usually adult basic upgrading, high school equivalency, English language training, and skills development.”

II. Methodology

The engagement was completed over the time period of approximately mid-June to mid-November.

Initial Phase

Activities in the Initial phase of the project were associated with gaining a better understanding of the “dynamics” of the problems and opportunities and major components included:

- A review of relevant statistics Canada demographic data;
- A higher level review of trends in the delivery of foundational learning;
- An analysis of Grade 3, 6 and 9 Achievement Test and Diploma Examination results and other performance indicators such as graduation, transition and drop-out rates for Northern Alberta students, with separate breakouts for First Nation, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) students; and
- A review of occupational supply and demand for non-professional occupations and their associated skills requirements.

These findings were later augmented with a higher level analysis of the barriers faced by students in remote, rural and northern locations in accessing educational opportunities and the policies and positions of the Governments of Alberta and Canada.

Principal Phase

The Principal Phase of the project entailed a more detailed analysis of a range of models and programs to address the problems, semi-structured telephone interviews with stakeholders, and the development of a business case to support the provision of funding given our findings and other information scans.

Model Review

There were four main themes to the model and program review:

- Exploring initiatives, programs and trends in four other countries (Australia, New Zealand, England and Norway) that were considered to have conditions similar to Northern Alberta (resource-based, remoteness, and low and/or with a strong indigenous populations) or progressive or innovative.
- Addressing “pure academic” teaching related needs including, assessment, curriculum development, and monitoring progress;
- Addressing funding needs and barriers for both learners and service providers; and
- Addressing a range of other issues such as increasing capacity, providing pathways and mentorship, and gaining better alignment with needs.

Interviews

We completed successful telephone interviews with 13 out of 26 stakeholders with representing small business, economic development organizations, front-line managers involved with the delivery of programs, educators from School Districts and postsecondary colleges, and trade unions.

In order to help to validate and possibly focus our model review, our objectives were to:

- Gain a better understanding of the dynamics of the delivery of foundational learning participation in initiatives, partners and roles, other main contacts or linkages, and other matters associated with the delivery, planning and monitoring of outcomes;
- Explore problems currently encountered;
- Explore suggestions for improvement;
- When relevant, attempt to quantify future staffing or skills needs;
- Obtain feedback on two possible “solutions”; and
- Obtain feedback on other possible models to explore or individuals to contact.

Business Case

The Business Case to support the need for Foundational Learning was developed from three “themes”:

- A learning gap- developed on the need for additional foundational learning based on the differences in the proportion of Northern Albertans who had graduated from high school compared to comparable figures for the balance of Alberta and the generally lower results of Northern Albertans Alberta Education Achievement and Diploma exams and a number of other statistics related to high school student performance.
- The relationship to and alignment with achievement of goals and initiatives for the key Government of Alberta Ministries (Education, Enterprise and Advanced Education and Human Services).

- An economic and social benefits argument that also included a positive cost-benefit analysis for a hypothetical but, in our view, very realistic Intervention (expenditure) to address the problem.

III. Limitations

Due to the project's scope and available budget, readers and users of this report need to be mindful of a number of limitations, as summarized below:

- Parts of the report make use of Government of Canada Census data and present it by Census Division resulting in two issues. Firstly, the boundaries of the NADC region do not conform perfectly with the Census Divisions. The extra effort/cost associated with obtaining a perfect match (adjustments for the Counties of Athabasca and Woodlands and the town of Whitecourt) were not considered to be beneficial or having a material impact on higher level analyses or conclusions in a number of instances. As such, data from Athabasca and Woodlands Counties are not included in some instances. Furthermore, it was necessary to use 2006 data as 2011 data in the required or desired formats were not available at the project's commencement.
- The report makes use of School Division data provided by Alberta Education for which there are two minor issues or inconsistencies. Firstly, some School Divisions, such as Northlands 61, encompass a very broad area within multiple Census Divisions. Secondly, some Francophone School Districts operating in Northern Alberta draw some students from parts of the province not in the NADC region. In both instances, a reasonable effort has been made to "adjust/accommodate" the data; however, it cannot be fully comprehensive.
- Interviews with "quality" (knowledgeable and interested) stakeholders were used to validate findings or obtain additional perspectives on some topics. Despite extensive effort to "secure" the interviews, the actual number completed (13) is less than planned. While each provided valuable insight, one is cautioned that they represented individual views. General trends or conclusions can be drawn on some topics but not others.
- The broad nature and varying definitions and levels of foundational learning, and the fluid and complex nature of the issue, necessitated the exercise of judgment in the allocation of resources and effort for the project. This issue is discussed at greater length in Chapter 7.
- Finally, data readily available within the public domain (for the discussion and analysis of models for example) is rarely specifically focused on the unique needs of Northern Alberta and, again, judgment has been required in terms of how it is used for this project.

Given the above, the report should be viewed as a starting point to focus future efforts toward addressing the skills shortages of Northern Alberta.

IV. Organization of Report

The organization of the balance of this report is as follows:

- Chapter 2 – Environmental Scan
- Chapter 3 – Summary and Analysis of Student Performance
- Chapter 4 – Occupational and Skills Analysis
- Chapter 5 – Business Case for the Need for Foundational Learning
- Chapter 6 – Summary of Stakeholder Consultations
- Chapter 7 – Model Review
- Chapter 8 – Finding, Conclusions and Recommendations

- Appendix 1 – Covering Letter and Questionnaire
- Appendix 2 - Bibliography

Chapter 2 – Environmental Scan

In this Chapter we introduce and provide additional discussion of a number of factors and issues that we believe will help to provide context to other aspect of this report. They include:

- Select socioeconomic indicators from the 2006 Census (the most recent specific data available at the commencement of the project);
- A recap of the existing programming at the four Clearinghouse Colleges;
- A brief overview of the political landscape – the positions and policies of the Governments of Canada and Alberta relative to issues that affect the delivery of foundational learning; and
- In part as a result of the preceding, a brief discussion of barriers faced by many learners that are in need of foundational learning within the NADC region.

I. Select Socioeconomic Indicators

Based upon 2006 Census data, we provide a brief review of select factors of relevance to the need for foundational learning in Northern Alberta. There may be minor discrepancies in other figures in use as some tables are developed from 20% Census Sample data and also contain rounding. There are also very minor differences as the NADC region boundary does not conform perfectly with the major Census Divisions and the effort to account for the differences is not considered to be worthwhile.

Population by Age Group

Generally the composition of the NADC region population is younger than the rest of the province. Northern Alberta has a smaller proportion of its population in the older age categories (i.e. 60 years plus) compared to the balance of the province (10.9% compared to 15.2%). Conversely, the Northern Alberta has a higher proportion of children and young adults under the age of 20 compared to the balance of the province (31.3% compared to 25.9%). The following table provides a breakdown and comparison of the population of the NADC region to the balance of the Alberta.

Breakdown and Comparison of the Population of the NADC Region – 2006

Age	NADC	Non-NADC	Alberta	NADC % of Total	Non-NADC % of Total
0-4	23,295	179,030	202,600	7.64%	6.01%
5-9	23,105	180,735	204,115	7.58%	6.06%
10-14	24,885	199,555	224,805	8.16%	6.69%
15-19	24,275	213,450	237,905	7.96%	7.16%
20-24	23,865	227,220	251,380	7.83%	7.62%
25-29	23,210	217,090	240,530	7.61%	7.28%
30-34	22,535	211,490	234,305	7.39%	7.09%
35-39	22,145	215,505	237,845	7.26%	7.23%
40-44	24,940	242,990	268,285	8.18%	8.15%
45-49	24,315	250,110	274,740	7.98%	8.39%
50-54	20,040	217,055	237,465	6.57%	7.28%
55-59	15,055	173,845	189,260	4.94%	5.83%
60-64	10,275	123,050	133,705	3.37%	4.13%
65-69	7,480	94,615	102,405	2.45%	3.17%
70-74	5,955	80,830	86,920	1.95%	2.71%
75-79	4,305	67,080	71,470	1.41%	2.25%
80-84	2,975	47,425	50,320	0.98%	1.59%
85+	2,190	40,165	42,290	0.72%	1.35%
Total	304,845	2,981,240	3,290,345	100.00%	100.00%

Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population – 100% Data

Aboriginal Identity

The NADC region has a substantially higher proportion of persons with Aboriginal identity than the rest of the province (18.0% vs. 4.5%). The following table provides a breakdown and comparison of the NADC region Aboriginal population to the balance of Alberta.

Comparison of Aboriginal Populations of the NADC Region and Alberta – 2006

Aboriginal Identity	NADC	Non-NADC	Alberta	NADC % of Total	Non-NADC % of Total
North American Indian	30,105	64,035	97,280	10.08%	2.17%
Métis	22,370	62,740	85,500	7.49%	2.13%
Inuit	400	1,170	1,605	0.13%	0.04%
Multiple Aboriginal Identity	190	980	1,220	0.06%	0.03%
Aboriginal Response not Included Elsewhere	660	2,045	2,760	0.22%	0.07%
Total Aboriginal Population	53,830	131,065	188,365	18.02%	4.45%
Non-Aboriginal Population	244,825	2,817,220	3,067,990	81.98%	95.55%
Total Population	298,655	2,948,285	3,256,355	100.00%	100.00%

Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population – 20% Sample Data

Labour Force Activity

The NADC region has similar total proportions of employment and unemployment as the rest of Alberta. However, the rate of unemployment in many of the smaller communities within the NADC region is significantly higher than the larger communities. This is evidenced by the average unemployment rate for NADC communities being 13% as compared to 5% for communities outside the NADC. The following table provides a breakdown and comparison of the NADC region Aboriginal population to the balance of Alberta.

Comparison of Labour Force of the NADC and Alberta – 2006

Labour Force Characteristics	NADC	Non-NADC	Alberta	NADC % of Total	Non-NADC % of Total
Employed	166,115	1,689,245	1,859,960	70.70%	73.16%
Unemployed	8,285	74,170	82,860	3.10%	3.26%
In the Labour Force	174,450	1,763,425	1,942,820	73.80%	76.42%
Not in the Labour Force	54,245	625,825	682,320	26.19%	26.84%
Total Population 15 Years Plus	228,760	2,389,370	2,542,280	100.00%	100.00%
Average Participation rate (%)	64.92%	67.64%	74.00%		
Average Employment rate (%)	57.86%	64.35%	70.90%		
Average Unemployment rate (%)	12.52%	5.39%	4.30%		

Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population – 20% Sample Data

Note: the Average Participation, Employment and Unemployment rates presented in this table reflect a simple average of all communities within and outside the NADC region and are not weighted by the size of community.

Employment by Industry Group

Compared to the rest of Alberta, the NADC region has a higher proportion of total employment in two industry groups: Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and; Mining and oil and gas extraction. The following table provides a summary and comparison of employment by industry group.

Summary and Comparison of Employment by Industry Group – 2006

	NADC	Non-NADC	Alberta	NADC % of Total	Non-NADC % of Total
11 Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting	12,120	62,880	75,875	6.97%	3.57%
21 Mining and oil and gas extraction	28,145	106,035	134,620	16.18%	6.02%
22 Utilities	1,530	16,425	18,030	0.88%	0.93%
23 Construction	17,110	151,810	169,420	9.84%	8.62%
31-33 Manufacturing	8,285	129,710	138,365	4.76%	7.36%
41 Wholesale trade	5,350	79,860	85,510	3.08%	4.53%
44-45 Retail trade	18,025	188,255	206,660	10.36%	10.68%
48-49 Transportation and warehousing	9,570	88,890	98,875	5.50%	5.04%
51 Information and cultural industries	1,470	34,300	35,970	0.85%	1.95%
52 Finance and insurance	2,775	56,630	59,560	1.60%	3.21%
53 Real estate and rental and leasing	3,190	34,540	37,905	1.83%	1.96%
54 Professional, scientific and technical services	6,160	139,075	145,475	3.54%	7.89%
55 Management of companies and enterprises	60	2,490	2,590	0.03%	0.14%
56 Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	4,920	66,290	71,365	2.83%	3.76%
61 Educational services	10,765	109,295	120,460	6.19%	6.20%
62 Health care and social assistance	11,935	162,645	175,205	6.86%	9.23%
71 Arts, entertainment and recreation	1,765	34,265	36,280	1.01%	1.94%
72 Accommodation and food services	10,690	116,675	127,630	6.15%	6.62%
81 Other services (except public administration)	9,305	89,425	99,050	5.35%	5.08%
91 Public administration	9,520	79,755	89,800	5.47%	4.53%
Industry - Not applicable	1,250	12,755	14,185	0.72%	0.72%
All industries	172,690	1,749,250	1,928,645	99.28%	99.28%
Total labour force 15 years and over	173,940	1,762,005	1,942,830	100.00%	100.00%

Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population – 20% Sample Data

Education Attainment - Population 25-64 Years

The NADC region had a substantially higher proportion of persons 25-64 years old who had not obtained a certificate, diploma or degree as compared to the rest of Alberta (23.5% compared to 14.7%). The following table provides a summary and comparison of education attainment for the population aged 25 to 64.

**Summary and Comparison of Education Attainment – 2006
(Population aged 25 to 64 Years)**

	NADC	Non-NADC	Alberta	NADC % of Total	Non-NADC % of Total
No certificate, diploma or degree	37,425	240,070	278,970	23.39%	14.63%
Certificate, diploma or degree	122,595	1,400,550	1,526,670	76.61%	85.37%
High school certificate or equivalent	39,105	393,985	434,330	24.44%	24.01%
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	26,975	195,515	223,325	16.86%	11.92%
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	33,225	353,875	388,235	20.76%	21.57%
University certificate, diploma or degree	23,115	456,875	480,775	14.45%	27.85%
University certificate or diploma below bachelor level	5,230	77,930	83,355	3.27%	4.75%
University certificate or degree	17,940	378,995	397,420	11.21%	23.10%
Bachelor's degree	13,195	262,050	275,640	8.25%	15.97%
University certificate or diploma above bachelor level	1,330	26,930	28,340	0.83%	1.64%
Degree in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or optometry	500	11,395	11,960	0.31%	0.69%
Master's degree	2,630	64,810	67,570	1.64%	3.95%
Earned doctorate	330	13,580	13,910	0.21%	0.83%
Total population 25 to 64 years	160,020	1,640,620	1,805,640	100.00%	100.00%

Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population – 20% Sample Data

Immigrant Status

The NADC region has a substantially smaller proportion of immigrants than the rest of the province (6.3% vs. 17.5%). The following table provides a summary and comparison of the immigrant status of residents of the NADC region compared to the balance of Alberta.

Summary and Comparison of Immigrant Status – 2006

	NADC	Non-NADC	Alberta	NADC % of Total	Non-NADC % of Total
Non-immigrants	262,565	2,391,775	2,702,220	93.74%	82.46%
Born in province of residence	171,060	1,569,215	1,785,220	61.07%	54.10%
Born outside province of residence	91,495	822,460	917,000	32.66%	28.36%
Immigrants	17,540	508,785	527,030	6.26%	17.54%
Total population by immigrant status and place of birth	280,105	2,900,560	3,229,250	100.00%	100.00%

Statistics Canada, 2006 Census of Population – 20% Sample Data

Note:

Some feedback from stakeholders, as referenced in Chapter 6, is suggestive that there may be a growing demand for English as a Second Language and other “life skills” especially among spouses of workers and other less educated immigrants coming to Northern Alberta.

II. Existing Foundational Learning Related Activities at the Four Clearinghouse Colleges

This Section provides a brief summary of the existing foundational learning related programs currently offered at the four colleges included in the Labour Market Information Clearinghouse Consortium. Unless otherwise indicated, it has been prepared based on the information contained in the colleges' web sites as of mid-September, 2012.

A. Grande Prairie Regional College

The main campus is in Grande Prairie and a satellite campus is located in Fairview. The foundational learning programs offered are discussed briefly below:

- **Academic Upgrading:** Academic Upgrading offers a broad range of courses in a variety of subject areas that span pre-high school to high school equivalency.
- **High School Equivalency Certificate:** Students may apply for a Certificate of Grade 12 Equivalency from Grande Prairie Regional College if they successfully complete (receive a passing grade) English and either Math or Social Studies and two other Grade 12 courses.
- **Transitional Vocational Certificate** at Fairview Campus (46 weeks in three semesters): Program focuses on adults with special needs who require a bridge between living at home and living and working in the community. The program has five key areas: Employment Training, Independent Living Skills, Work Placement, Successful Living Skills Placement and Graduate Follow-up. The program includes two full-time work experience segments (one of nine weeks and the other of five weeks).
- **General Education Development (GED):** For individuals who require recognition equivalent to a high school graduate for employment purposes, upon passing the required exams.

B. Keyano College

Keyano College has campuses in Fort McMurray and Fort Chipewyan, and Regional Learning Centres in Conklin, Janvier, Gregoire Lake and Fort McKay. The foundational learning programs offered are discussed briefly below:

- **Academic Foundations:** The Academic Foundations program offers adults the opportunity to upgrade to the Grade Nine equivalency. There are three levels to choose from: *Entry (Adult Literacy)*, *Intermediate* and *Advanced*. Placement is based on the individual applicant's skills and knowledge. All three levels are available on a full or part-time basis. Upon completion, students may continue in the College Preparation program, or qualify for admission into Career or Trades programs or enter the workplace.
- **College and Career Preparation:** The College Preparation program is tailored to meet the needs of adults who wish to upgrade their academic education to a level that will allow them to enter apprenticeship, technical, career or university programs, or to gain employment entry skills. The program consists of selected subjects and skill development at the Grade 10, 11, and 12 equivalency levels. The length of time required to complete the program will depend on a student's background, motivation and goals.
- **Transitional:** Keyano College offers a 10-month pre-employment program that prepares students for post-secondary opportunities or employment. It is designed for people who have experienced barriers to learning such as developmental delays and learning problems. The program's goal is to develop students' organizational, educational, and career goals so they move closer to securing employment or consider further education.

The program is divided into four parts:

- (1) Life Management Skills
- (2) Employability Skills
- (3) Individual Academic Programming
- (4) Work Experience

The program will run from September to the end of June. Students graduate with a Transitional Certificate if they have completed all four parts and have completed a portfolio.

The 2012-13 “all in” per-term tuition fees for students in the preceding programs are approximately:

- Academic Foundations - \$1,450;
- College and career Preparation - \$1,450; and
- Transitional - \$1,750.

Other Comments

Increased program and course delivery activity is occurring at regional campuses and learning centres (for example, Syncrude Aboriginal Trades Preparation in Fort Chipewyan, Fort McKay, Janvier and Fort McMurray) through collaboration with Syncrude, Alberta Human Services, First Nations and Métis collaborators, and GED preparation in Fort McMurray and Fort Chipewyan.

C. Northern Lakes College

The Northern Lakes College service region is large and encompasses in excess of 160,000 square kilometres in north-central Alberta. There are two main campuses in Grouard and Slave Lake, and satellite campuses/learning centres in the following locations:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athabasca • Atikameg • Barrhead • Cadotte Lake • Calling Lake • Driftpile • East Prairie 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairview • Faust • Flatbush • Fort Vermilion • Gift Lake • Grande Prairie • High Level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Prairie • La Crete • Loon River • Manning • Marten Lakes • Wilderness • McLennan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paddle Prairie • Peace River • Peavine • Peerless Lake • Smith • Wabasca • Swan Hills • Valleyview
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The foundational learning related programs offered by Northern Lakes College, usually delivered in two 20-week semesters (full-time or part-time), include the following:

- **Adult Basic Education:** The Adult Basic Education program provides students with the opportunity to continue their education in preparation for high school study, career training or employment. Students will receive assistance from the Educational Counselor and Learning Facilitators to determine the courses they require and to develop an Education Plan to reach their chosen goal. Core courses include Math and Communications (English Language Arts). Options include Employability, Science and Social Studies.
- **High School:** Students develop an Educational Plan and enroll in courses they require to gain entrance to the Career Training or University Studies program of their choice. Core academic courses include English Language Arts, Mathematics, Social Studies, Information Processing, Science, Biology, Chemistry and Physics. In special circumstances, courses may be accessed through the Alberta Distance Learning Centre. Students may also complete High School via e-campus Alberta but will be required to have the necessary computer equipment and Internet access. Group sessions are

scheduled and usually mandatory. The instructor and students communicate orally and through text messages in real time, view slides on the computer screen, interact by using drawing tools (a mouse, tablet and pen), and surf the internet together. Lessons can be recorded to enable students to review the classes at a later time. In some instances, two-way video is used to enable class members to see each other. Because this technology is Internet-based, students can access their courses from a variety of approved locations.

- **Life Skills:** This three month, full-time program provides an opportunity to learn effective problem-solving skills and to build self esteem, through structured learning experiences. Over the course of the program, students will identify their personal values, strengths and growth potential. They will practice skills associated with responsible decision-making and problem-solving, as they relate to effective self-management at school, work and in the home. The program provides students with an opportunity to practice selecting appropriate alternatives in response to real life situations they might encounter.

The estimated 2012-13 costs (tuition fees, learning materials and student association etc.) to students for study at Northern Lakes College are approximately as below:

- Adult Basic Education and High School - \$815 per five credit course or \$3,050 for 20 credit Adult Basic Education per term or \$2,430 per term for 15 credit High School; and
- Life Skills - \$1,700 per term.

Other Comments

Based upon the most recent (2010-11) Annual Report for Northern Lakes College, a number of other comments help to frame the context of and need for foundational learning. They are summarized below:

- An on-going need for adult preparatory education in the region.
- A larger population of young Aboriginal adults.
- Significant gap in high school completion rates. Northern K-12 school systems are seeking a greater breadth of relevant programming options to improve completion rates. Post-secondary partnerships are part of the solution and these options are achievable with creativity and investment.
- There is increasing interest by industry to support local education and training initiatives.
- Education and “meaningful” employment are important to local residents.
- Advanced Skills and a path of preparation to get there are desired. Providing opportunities in local communities, expanding community capacity, and developing innovative approaches to increasing participation of Aboriginal and under-represented populations are locally expressed needs.
- Inadequacy of student grant support for helping students to acquire meaningful employment continues to be a frustration for low-income residents.
- Communities within the region are recognizing the strength of partnership as they work together to meet needs. Requests for College participation in partnerships are increasing significantly.
- A growing interest in promoting youth engagement.
- More part-time, distance delivery and other alternative delivery methods for working individuals will be required as more jobs are created.
- Need to increase dual credit and joint High School offerings.
- Need to reduce barriers to entry associated with high cost of programs for low income individuals and readiness assessments.
- Goal to have 25% of postsecondary enrollments, excluding apprentices, to be derived from foundational learning programs.

D. Portage College

Portage College has nine campuses: Lac La Biche, St Paul, Cold Lake, Bonnyville, Frog Lake, Saddle Lake, Vegreville, Wainwright, and Whitefish Lake. The foundational learning programs provided are discussed briefly below:

- **Academic Foundations – Certificate Level:** Academic Foundations provides students with the opportunity to learn or review foundational academic skills in communications, mathematics, science, social studies and computers at the pre-high school level. It also provides them with the opportunity to do career and personal assessments. The courses are adapted for adult students with a wide range of backgrounds and educational experiences. Academic Foundations prepares students for entry into college preparation courses, career studies, or employment.
- **College Preparation/UCEP – Certificate Level:** College Preparation offers a wide variety of accredited Alberta Education curriculum high school courses so that learners may continue their education in preparation for college and university, technical institutes, skills-training programs and apprenticeship training for direct-entry to employment. College Preparation at Portage College utilizes different modes of delivery to accommodate learner needs. A personalized education plan is prepared for each student to meet his or her academic goals
- **Employability Skills – Certificate Level:** The Employability Skills Program assists students in making the transition from school to the workplace. The program is 30 weeks in length consisting of a 19-week classroom component followed by 11 weeks of supervised work placement. The classroom component combines applied academics and general employability skills with job-specific skills. Depending on the students' choice of occupation, they will have an opportunity to obtain certification in skills that will add value in the workplace. The work placement component offered in the second semester focuses on helping students acquire the employment and occupational skills needed to find and maintain employment.
- **English as a Second Language Immersion:** English as a Second Language provides learners with the language skills necessary to begin regular upgrading or to get and keep entry-level jobs. Following a curriculum based on the Canadian Language Benchmarks, learners will attain Proficiency at the CLB Benchmark Five level. ESL is offered in three phases: Level 1 - Basic Proficiency in English, Level 2 - Intermediate Proficiency in English, Level 3 - Advanced Proficiency in English.
- **Practical Nurse Foundations:** The Practical Nurse Foundations program is a 16-week program designed to prepare students for entrance into the Practical Nurse program. In order to complete the requirements for entrance into practical nurse programs, students must complete high school course work in English and biology at the 30 level, and mathematics at the 20 level, as well as Introduction to Anatomy and Physiology, medical terminology, and Heart-Saver CPR.
- **Service, Tourism and Retail:** The Service Tourism & Retail program is designed to provide the necessary skills, or to prepare for continuing education, in a related field such as tourism or the service industry. The program has a three-week work placement, which provides hands-on training. At present, this program is suspended.

The estimated all in cost (tuition, books and other fees) to students in various programs is approximately:

- Academic Upgrading, College Prep/UCEP and Practical Nurse Foundations - \$2,366 per term; and
- Employability Skills (30 weeks) - \$6,300.

III. Political Landscape – Policies and Positions of the Governments of Canada and Alberta

Before proceeding with a more complete analysis of potential models or solutions to the foundational learning “problem” in Northern Alberta, it was also necessary to develop a greater appreciation of how they might fit within the current political context and programs and priorities.

We note that the “delivery of education programs, skills development and labour market training in Canada is primarily a provincial/territorial responsibility. However, the federal government is responsible for the education and well-being of First Nations peoples living on reserves. Federal financial support for skills development is delivered primarily under bilateral agreements with provincial and territorial governments and Aboriginal communities, as well as grants and contributions to the private sector and community organizations for labour market training initiatives.”¹

Given the above, a brief summary of relevant Government of Canada and Government of Alberta programs, policies and positions is presented below.

A. Government of Alberta

1. Government-Wide

At the highest strategic level relative to foundational learning policy is the 2012-15 Government of Alberta Strategic Plan, “*Budget 2012*”. Within the document, the goals that have the highest relevancy to foundational learning policy include:

- **Goal Number 2, “Support Vulnerable Albertans – Our most vulnerable Albertans are protected and supported so they can reach their full potential”**

Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A successful Alberta is one in which every Albertan is empowered to be part of the economic, social and cultural life of the province. This is true at every age and for every situation, from young children, and those with disabilities, to our elderly citizens. Everyone, when given the right support, can enjoy the opportunities our province provides. • Government is committed to working together across ministries and with our service delivery and community partners to provide the right supports and achieve outcomes that make a positive difference in Albertans’ lives and support those who need it most. Appropriate supports will help vulnerable Albertans respond to the challenges they face and achieve their full potential with confidence and dignity.
Relevant Mandates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Involving other Ministers, lead the development of a social policy framework to guide the alignment and redesign of social policy and programs to achieve better outcomes for children and families. (Human Services) ✓ Ensure information sharing practices within government and with service agencies support the best decisions possible in regard to the health, education and safety of children and families.(Human Services)
Relevant Key Performance Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase the percentage of participants employed after leaving income support programs to 70% by 2014-15 from 63% in 2010-11.

Source: 2012-15 Government of Alberta Strategic Plan “Budget 2012”

¹ Skills Development in Remote Rural Communities in an Era of Restraint, Report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, June 2012. <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=5686006&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=41&Ses=1&File=45>

- **Goal Number 4**, “Invest in Learning – Build a knowledge-inspired economy by offering a sustainable education system that meets the needs of our province and Albertans throughout their lives”.

Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and innovation will be the key to how Alberta grows and changes to meet the challenges of a rapidly developing world. We will need an educated, skilled workforce and a collaborative, cutting-edge research community to develop the resources we are fortunate to have, as well as to diversify into new and exciting industries. Every Albertan should have the opportunity to benefit from a leading-edge education, from kindergarten to the highest levels of post-secondary education. • Government is committed to ensuring Alberta students, regardless of geographical area or situation, are given the opportunity to expand their education and reach their full potential. A key part of this is expanding the capacity of post-secondary institutions and their ability to drive a knowledge-inspired economy.
Relevant Mandates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Identify strategies to expand the recruitment of post-secondary students in rural areas, including those within Métis and First Nations communities. (Advanced Education and Technology) ✓ Deliver high-speed internet connectivity to un-serviced locations in rural Alberta. (Agriculture and Rural Development; and Service Alberta)
Relevant Key Performance Indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase the high school completion rate of students within five years of entering grade 10 from the 79% in 2009-10 to 82% by 2014-15. ➤ Increase the percentage of students entering post-secondary programs (including apprenticeship) within six years of entering Grade 10 from 59.3% in 2009-10 to 61.0% by 2014-15. ➤ Increase the high school completion rate for Albertans aged 25-34 and postsecondary education completion rate for Albertans aged 25 to 64 from 90.7% in 2010-11 to 92.0% by 2014-15 and 62.0% in 2010-11 to 64.0% by 2014-15, respectively. ➤ Reduce the difference in the unemployment rate between on-reserve and off-reserve Aboriginals from 7.6 percentage points to 5.5 percentage points or less by 2014-15.

Source: 2012-15 Government of Alberta Strategic Plan “Budget 2012”

2. Individual Ministry Goals and Strategies

Human Services

Goals

Goals, as outlined in the Ministry’s 2012-15 Business Plan, are summarized below.

Other Alberta Human Services Goals and Strategies in 2012

	Last Actual (year)	Target 2012-13	Target 2013-14	Target 2014-15
Percentage of youth receiving Advancing Futures Bursaries who successfully completed their planned studies during the fiscal year	79%	81%	81%	81%
Percentage of clients reporting they are either employed or in further education or training after leaving a skills training program	72%	75%	75%	75%
Inter-provincial rank of Alberta’s labour force participation rate (#1 is the highest)	1 (72.9%)	1	1	1
Inter-provincial rank of Alberta’s First Nations, Métis and Inuit off-reserve labour force participation rate	1 (70.6%)	1	1	1

Skills Investment Strategy

A key component of Alberta's foundational learning policy is the *Skills Investment Strategy* under the Human Services Ministry. Its objective is to help maintain the province's high standard of living. A priority is to ensure that Albertans are prepared for success in the labour market through effective employment and training programs and services. To contribute to this success, the Skills Investment Strategy has been designed to respond to labour market trends that include:

- Labour market fluctuations;
- The evolving nature of technologies affecting all workers across all industrial sectors;
- The increasingly complex labour market (e.g. global competition, changing nature of work, changing skills requirements);
- The increasingly diverse Alberta workforce; and
- The need for Albertans to continuously upgrade their skills and participate in lifelong learning, as the economy becomes more knowledge based.

Clients include people eligible for, or receiving Employment Insurance benefits, low-income individuals, Aboriginal people, immigrants, persons with disabilities, youth and older workers. Individuals are responsible for providing the information needed to determine if they are eligible for funding and they must be willing to invest the time and energy needed to make successful changes in their lives. In return, they benefit from enhanced opportunities to access employment and training programs and services on a full or part-time basis.

Stakeholders include employers, training providers, government and community organizations all have a stake in ensuring programs and services are responsive to training needs. Building a highly skilled workforce in Alberta requires commitment, collaboration, and high-level coordination among all stakeholders. The strategy depends on this extensive network of partners and providers, and on a diverse delivery system, to supply more effective training programs and services to Albertans.²

Goals

The goals of the *Skills Investment Strategy* of the Government of Alberta are to:

- Increase opportunities for Albertans to make successful transitions from school to work, unemployment to employment, and from one career path to another.
- Increase the capacity of Albertans to respond efficiently and effectively to changing skills, knowledge, and abilities required by the economy.
- Reduce the dependency of Albertans on income support programs and increase sustained employment over time.
- Increase the range of assistance and support to employers so that they may prepare for and respond to the changing demand for skills, knowledge, and abilities called for by an expanding economy.
- Enhance the contribution of Albertans for whom full-time employment is not a viable option.³

Principal Programs

The principal programs associated with delivery of the Skills Investment Strategy, many of which provide financial support to participants, albeit on a first come, first served basis, are summarized in the following table.

² Alberta Human Services, Skills Investment Strategy. <http://humanservices.alberta.ca/working-in-alberta/3161.html>. Accessed on October 9, 2012.

³ Alberta Human Resources and Employment, Skills Investment Strategy, Supporting the Development of a Skilled Workforce in Alberta, Policy Framework, October, 2003. P 2-11

Principal Programs Associated with Delivery of the Skills Investment Strategy⁴

Initiative	Comments
Career Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career Development Services includes career planning, job search and labour market information available to all Albertans through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Career and Employment Assistance Services (CEAS) ○ Job Order Bank Service ○ Job Placement Services ○ Print and electronic resources • Youth Connections helps young people explore career opportunities and helps businesses find employees who are motivated and under the age of 25. • Objective of making employers and employees more aware of opportunities trends and facilitate informed choices about training. • While services are provided by telephone, Internet and some mobile means, many Northern Albertans in remote locations do not have the confidence or abilities to access services and mobile delivery lacks in frequency or duration for many remote communities.
Work Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time and part-time classroom training for Academic Upgrading (grade 4-12), English-as-a-Second Language Training, and/or general employability skills training. Adult Basic Education at grade 1-3 level is available in special circumstances.
Training for Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time and part-time occupationally focused training of 12-months or less. Training may be integrated with applied academics and general employability skills. All occupational training programs must teach skills that are in demand by local/regional employers and provide evidence that the graduates of the programs will find work in occupations related to their training without having to undertake further training. Program includes classroom-based and workplace-based training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Integrated Training:</i> Skill-based training programs for multi-barriered clients that combine academic and general employability skills with job-specific skills. ○ <i>Occupational Training:</i> Classroom-based training that is occupation-specific and focused on helping clients acquire the job specific skills needed to significantly improve their employment status. ○ <i>Workplace Training:</i> Worksite training or exposure that focuses on helping clients acquire the employment skills needed to find and maintain employment and increase their income from employment. This type of Job Skills Training has two parts: Work Exposure (designed to help clients develop an awareness of specific occupation and employment opportunities over a period of a few weeks) and Workplace Training (tailor-made and structured worksite-based training opportunities of 6 months or less that teach clients specific skills for occupations that are in demand).
Job Corps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides structured, supportive training and work experience for individuals who have a sporadic employment history. The program gives participants the opportunity to work and earn a wage while learning reliable employment skills. Participants are hired by the Ministry and are paid minimum wage plus employer contributions. They work on projects for local communities and non-profit organizations. The program is designed to work in cooperation with employers, training providers, aboriginal groups, community organizations and schools.
First Nations Training to Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fosters relationships between First Nations people, the private sector, industry, unions, training providers, the federal government and the provincial government. • Provides First Nations people (primarily living on reserve) who are unemployed or underemployed with the skills needed for sustained employment in occupations with long-term employment prospects. • The elements of the program will reflect a holistic approach and will include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ life management and employment coping/job readiness skills ○ employability skills ○ work related literacy skills ○ specific occupation skills ○ paid work experience or training on the job ○ placement, follow-up and employment support
Workforce Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Labour Market Program is designed to identify, develop and implement projects with organizations, industry sectors and communities with common labour market needs. Projects include activities such as a labour market environmental scan, and development of a strategic plan to address skill shortages and promote workforce effectiveness.

⁴ Alberta Human Resources and Employment, Skills Investment Strategy, Supporting the Development of a Skilled Workforce in Alberta, Policy Framework, October, 2003. P 2-11

Enterprise and Advanced Education

Goals

Key foundational learning related goals as outlined in the Ministry's 2012-15 Business Plan are summarized in the following table.

Key Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education Foundational Learning Related Goals

Overall Student Population	Last Actual (year)	Target 2012-13	Target 2013-14	Target 2014-15
Percentage of Albertans age 18-34 participating in post-secondary education	18% (2010-11)	18%	19%	19%
Percentage of Albertans age 25-64 who have completed post-secondary education	62% (2010-11)	62%	63%	64%

Other Initiatives

Other foundational learning related initiatives under the responsibility of Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education are summarized in the following table.

Foundational Learning Related Initiatives under Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education

Initiative	Comments
Continuing Education – Community Based Non-credit Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 80 Community Adult Learning Councils to provide a range of programs across the province. Councils offer community-based, non-credit learning opportunities in adult literacy, adult English as a Second Language (ESL), high school upgrading, employability enhancement, addressing community issues, as well as other lifelong learning opportunities. Councils respond to their communities' unique learning needs and are a place to find information on local learning opportunities.
Adult Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports Community Adult Learning Councils, which provide part-time adult literacy classes and part-time English language learning classes, Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy Programs, which match adult learners with a volunteer tutor to assist with improving reading, writing and numeracy skills, and family literacy programs for parents and their preschool children. Literacy programs are also available at post-secondary institutions.
Family Literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent-Child Literacy Strategy was developed to strengthen the adult literacy skills of parents/caregivers, to enhance the early oral language development of their pre-school children, to support and foster the involvement of parents in their children's learning, and to enhance community-based partnerships that support the development of language and literacy skills of families.
Other Literacy Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Centre for Family literacy is dedicated to helping families grow and prosper. The programs, training and research help Alberta families achieve what they imagine - improved education, jobs and health. Literacy Alberta is a provincial coalition for adult literacy with membership open to anyone with an interest. The National Adult Literacy Database is a one-stop centre for information on adult literacy programs, resources, services and activities in Canada.

Alberta Education

Goals

Key foundational learning related goals as outlined in the Ministry's 2012-15 Business Plan are summarized in the following table.

Key Alberta Education Foundational Learning Related Goals

Overall Student Population	Last Actual (year)	Target 2012-13	Target 2013-14	Target 2014-15
Overall percentage of students who achieved standards on provincial achievement tests in English and French Language Arts and Français3	A/ E 81.6%/17.4% (2010-11)	A/ E 82.5%/ 18.7%	A/ E 82.8%/ 18.9%	A/ E 83.0%/ 19.2%
Overall percentage of students who achieved standards on diploma examinations: • Language Arts • Mathematics	A/ E 86.1%/ 9.9% 78.8%/ 22.7% (2010-11)	A/ E 87.0%/ 10.6% 81.4%/ 24.6%	A E 87.4%/ 11.1% 81.1%/ 24.6%	A/ E 87.9%/ 11.5% 81.6%/ 25.1%
High school completion rate of students within five years of entering grade 10	79.0% (2008-09)	81.0%	81.5%	82.0%
Overall agreement of parents, teachers and students that students model the characteristics of active citizenship	84% (2010-11)	85%	86%	87%
Overall satisfaction of parents, teachers and the public that students demonstrate attitudes, skills, knowledge and behaviours to be successful when they finish school	76% (2010-11)	77%	78%	79%
First Nations Métis and Inuit Students	Last Actual (year)	Target 2012-13	Target 2013-14	Target 2014-15
Overall agreement of self-identified FNMI students and their parents that FNMI students are engaged in their learning	80% (2010-11)	81%	82%	82%
Overall percentage of self-identified FNMI students who achieved standards on provincial achievement tests in English and French Language Arts and Français3	A/ E 63.9%/ 5.7% (2009-10)	A/E 65.7%/ 7.4%	A/E 66.7%/ 8.2%	A/E 67.7%/ 9.0%
Overall percentage of self-identified FNMI students who achieved standards on diploma examinations: • Language Arts • Mathematics	A/ E 63.2%/ 5.3% 69.8%/ 9.91% (2010-11)	A/ E 84.7%/ 8.4% 73.6%/ 12.7%	A/ E 85.4%/ 8.6% 74.6%/ 13.7%	A/ E 86.2%/ 8.9% 75.4% 14.7%
High school completion rate of self-identified FNMI students within five years of entering grade 10	45% (2009-10)	48%	49%	49%
Annual dropout rate of self-identified FNMI students aged 14-18	10.4% (2009-10)	9.5%	9.0%	9.0%
Overall agreement of self-identified FNMI parents and high school students that students model the characteristics of active citizenship	77% (2010-11)	79%	79%	80%
Overall satisfaction of self-identified FNMI parents that students demonstrate attitudes, skills, knowledge and behaviours to be successful when they finish school	80% (2010-11)	81%	82%	82%

Other Initiatives

Alberta Education funds Outreach Programs to help students who have dropped out of school or are at risk of leaving. These programs usually operate in non-traditional settings such as shopping malls and use a variety of approaches to give students the individual help they need to complete grade 12. They also provide additional services including personal and career counselling, time management and study skills. Furthermore, although not every school or School Board has Outreach Programs, all are committed to assisting students to successfully complete high school.

B. Government of Canada

Relevant General Goals

While it is sometimes difficult to isolate the “Alberta, Northern Rural, Remote and Educational” components of broad national programs and strategies, a review of the Plans and Priorities of the two Ministries with the most responsibility regarding Northern Alberta foundational learning issues, reveals the following relevant goals and/or allocations:

Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development⁵

- Increase First Nations and Inuit high school graduation rates, as measured by percentage of First Nations high school graduates (compared to other Canadians and compared to trends in Census data, by gender, province and school type) by 8% over the period 2011-12 to 2016-17. Furthermore, there is a goal to increase the number of First Nations and Inuit who pursue postsecondary education. The target will be set when full details of the 2011 Census have been analysed. Nation-wide, the budget allocated to achieve these goals has been set at approximately \$1.6 to \$1.7 billion per year through to 2014-15.
- In addition, nation-wide, an annual allocation of \$1.6 to \$1.7 billion through to 2014-15 has been made to flow funds to First Nations, provincial representatives and other recipients who provide on-reserve residents and Yukon First Nations with individual and family services that are developed and implemented in collaboration with partners. These services help First Nation communities meet basic and special needs; support employability and attachment to the workforce; and ensure that individuals and families are safe.
- Funding for the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, with the objective of increasing employment, (and arguably encompassing individuals in Fort McMurray and Grande Prairie) has been sunset and a new source of funding is to be determined.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC)⁶

- Increase the percentage of the Canadian labour force aged 25-64 who have attained a post secondary education credential to 67.9%. (According to the 2006 Census data, the equivalent statistics were 50.2% for Northern Alberta and 59.4% province-wide. Data for 2011 were not available for this project.)
- Increase the percentage (and number) of full-time students aged 18-34 in participating provinces and territories who used a Canada Student loan or a Canada Student Grant or an in-study interest subsidy from the 2010-11 figures of 38.5% and approximately 484,000 to 41.6% and approximately 502,000.
- Increase the percentage of eligible children who have ever received either a Canada Education Savings Grant (from 42.8% in 2010 to 45.6% in 2012) or Canada Learning Bond (from 21.9% in 2010 to 26.0% in 2012).
- More specific details of a range of transfer payment programs that have direct or indirect impact on foundational learning activities in Northern Alberta may be obtained at the following web site <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rpp/2012-2013/inst/csd/st-ts01-eng.asp>.

⁵ Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada and Canadian Polar Commission, Section II, Analysis of Program Activities by Strategic Outcome. <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rpp/2012-2013/inst/ian/ian02-eng.asp>. Accessed October 11, 2012.

⁶ Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. Section II, Analysis of Program Activities by Strategic Outcome. <http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rpp/2012-2013/inst/csd/csd02-eng.asp> Accessed October 11, 2012.

Initiatives

The Senate Committee report, “Skills Development in Remote Rural Communities in an Era of Restraint”⁷, provides an excellent and current overview of Federal Government programs, policies and positions to achieve the goals noted above. Unless indicated otherwise, the following summary has been derived from the report. We have broken the initiatives into two components: “Aboriginal Specific” and “General”.

Aboriginal Specific Initiatives

The initiatives of HRSDC specific to Aboriginals are summarized in the following table.

Government of Canada Programs, Policies and Positions Regarding Skills Development in Rural Communities –Aboriginal Specific Initiatives

Aboriginal Initiatives	Comments
Education of First Nations on Reserve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding is provided to band councils to administer. • Although First Nations are required by the Department to offer a program equivalent to that of the province in which they are located — and by teachers approved by the province. • At present, there is some controversy as to whether First Nations under the Federal Government receive less money per students than provided by Provinces to whom the First Nations are directly responsible.
Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program expires in March of 2015. The strategy aims to help First Nations, Inuit and Métis find meaningful employment in the Canadian labour market. The strategy also supports demand-driven skills development through partnerships with the private sector, provinces, territories and Aboriginal groups. It also emphasizes accountability and results. • This program replaced the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Strategy.
Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership (ASEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A national initiative (concluded in March of 2012) that focused on developing skills and promotes increased participation of Aboriginal Peoples in major economic development projects through the creation of partnerships with their communities.
Skills and Partnership Fund — Aboriginal (SPF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched in July 2010, the Fund provides \$210 million over five years for projects that focus on skills development and the entry of First Nations, Inuit and Métis into the labour market. The projects that are funded must foster innovation, partnerships and new ways to deliver services. • The Fund will finish in 2015.
Post-Secondary Student Support Program University College Entrance Preparation Program Indian Studies Support Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs provide assistance to cover the cost of tuition, books, travel and living expenses, when applicable, for on and off reserve students. • Also provide financial support to post-secondary institutions for the development and delivery of college or university level courses for First Nations and Inuit students. • Programs are almost 100% administered and delivered by First Nations bands whose councils define their own selection criteria and policies, which can create inconsistencies. • It should be noted that funding for post-secondary education programs has been capped at 2% annual growth since 1996 and, as such, has arguably not kept pace with the growth rate of Aboriginal populations.

General Initiatives

The general initiatives of HRSDC are summarized in the following table.

⁷ Ibid

Government of Canada Programs, Policies and Positions Regarding Skills Development in Rural Communities - General Initiatives

General Initiatives	Comments
Learning Skilled Trades Apprenticeship Incentives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grants worth \$1,000 annually (up to \$2,000), and a tax deduction for the purchase of certain tools.
Youth Employment Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes the Canada Summer Jobs program, which allows youth to gain work experience during the summer, and other programs aimed at increasing young people's employability. In 2010-2011, the federal government spent \$275.1 million in contribution payments through this strategy.
Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fairly small HRDC program (nationally, approximately \$21.5 million annually from 2011-12 to 2013-14) to "work with partners to facilitate the creation of opportunities for Canadians to acquire the learning, literacy and essential skills they need to participate in a knowledge-based economy and society."
Labour Market Development Agreements (LMAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A nation-wide budget of approximately \$1.95 billion annually to help provinces and territories to develop and administer training programs locally for unemployed people. Each province and territory must complete an evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of their LMA by March 2013. Federal position is that shared responsibility is best way to ensure that local needs are met.
Opportunities Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aimed at increasing the participation of persons with disabilities in the labour market.
Targeted Initiative for Older Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A cost-shared program between the provinces and territories and the federal government, aimed at improving the employability of people aged 55 to 64 by helping them retrain, acquire skills and return to the labour market. The program is specifically for smaller communities, where unemployment is high (and often dependent on one major industry).
2012 Economic Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With nation-wide funding of \$275 million per year for the next three years, the plan proposes investing in First Nations education by providing early literacy programming, building and renovating schools on reserves, improving the on-reserve Income Assistance Program, promoting training programs to help individuals who can work to find employment, renewing the Urban Aboriginal Strategy to improve their economic opportunities, and introducing a First Nations Education Act to establish strong and accountable education systems on reserve.
Internet Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The definition of what it means to have access to high-quality Internet services keeps evolving. The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission released a new target in early 2011 that calls for all Canadians to have access to Internet services at 5 Mbps or faster by 2015. To put this target in perspective, the Broadband Canada: Connecting Rural Canadians program had a target of 1.5 Mbps or faster.
Broadband Canada: Connecting Rural Canadians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the overall budget, nation-wide, was \$225 million for 1,070 projects over three years starting in 2009, Alberta received only funding for 10 projects of which two small projects were within the NADC region.⁸
Canada Education Savings Program (CESP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides clients with the Canada Education Savings Grant, including a regular matching grant available to all Canadian children, and enhanced grant portions for low and middle income families; and the Canada Learning Bond, which is a grant intended for low income families.
Sector Council Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports formal, national partnerships of businesses and other key stakeholders that address issues of human resources investment and workplace skills development on a sectoral basis. Contribution payments primarily support demand-driven research and project-based activities proposed by Sector Councils and other national organizations (sector council-like) working on skills and learning issues. As a result of its recent wide-ranging strategic review, as of March 31, 2013, funding for "core" expenses (i.e., expenses that are not related to a specific project) will come to an end.
Community Futures Program (CFP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides operating assistance and investment capital to "community futures organizations" that in turn help support economic development at the community level including repayable financing for local businesses; a variety of business services for small and medium-sized and social enterprises; strategic community planning and socio-economic development. There are 11 locations in Alberta that are within the NADC region.⁹ While the mandate is broad, the realities of funding are that the budget for the overall program, nation-wide, was approximately \$11 million in 2010¹⁰ and, as such, cannot be expected to have great influence.

⁸Broadband Canada: Connecting Rural Canadians <http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/719.nsf/eng/00050.html#BC>. Accessed on October 2, 2012.

⁹Community Futures Network of Alberta. <http://www.cfna.ca/index.php>. Accessed on October 2, 2012

IV. Barriers Faced by Foundational Learning Students in Rural and Remote Communities

While a detailed and comprehensive scan is beyond the scope of this engagement, the findings presented in this Section help to frame the subsequent model analysis by serving as an initial filter of fit or relevance. Our analysis of barriers is based in part upon the discussion in the three previous sections and a review and consolidation of the findings of the following documents:

- *Opening the Door: Reducing barriers to Postsecondary Education in Canada* by the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology completed in December 2011;
- *A Learning Alberta: Increasing Accessibility to Advanced Education for Under-Represented Albertans* completed in July 2005;
- *Northern Rural Voices Research Results for Alberta-North Innovation Fund Project , “Attracting, Preparing, and Retaining Northern Learners in Post-Secondary Education” 2008 -2011* Pat Larson, Nancy Steel, Community Access Symposium, November 3, 2011; and
- *Suggestions for Attracting, Preparing, and Retaining Learners in Northern Communities: A Handbook*, Alberta North and eCampus Alberta, June 2011

Based upon our review and conclusions, the following table of barriers was developed.

Key Barriers to Participation for Rural and Northern Albertans

Barrier	Comments
Lack of Planning and Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regarding options, types of programs available, actual costs and sources of financial assistance. • Lack of prerequisites and/or poor study skills.
Socio-Cultural Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rural and Northern Albertans may be reluctant to leave their home communities, friends and social supports, and this is especially true with Aboriginal students. • Available support networks may be inadequate or discount the importance of education. • Aspirations of potential learners may be low or mismatched with opportunities and skills. • Institution’s culture and ability to accommodate the needs of different learners may vary. • Lack of familiarity or feeling of “fit” in a post-secondary institution (particularly for some disabled).
Physical Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persons with disabilities have some physical access barriers. • Given distances involved, some students lack transportation that is regular, reliable and affordable.
Lack of Childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality childcare that is reliable, affordable and available.
Availability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance delivery methods may not be appropriate for some learners. • Lower student numbers and increased costs may reduce the availability of programming due to lack of “critical mass”.
Gaps in Systems and Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity from K-12 into and between the adult learning systems, especially for those with delayed transitions (which has been a significant problem in Northern Alberta). • Lack of technology supports.
Cost and Available Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuition, text books, and living costs for individuals who are not eligible for Alberta Human Resources and Employment’s Work Foundations program and there are gaps in the eligibility and funding available for some Aboriginals, Métis and Inuit peoples, depending on status. • On-reserve Aboriginals may be further hampered in instances where the economic base of communities is such that there is a heavy reliance on Federal transfer payments (which are already stretched because of the Federal government’s fiscal position and increased demands of Aboriginal populations that have growth rates higher than provincial averages in many instances). • Funding for some aides for disabled students has been cut back. • Assistance limits for learners with dependents means that available funding is sometimes insufficient to cover childcare, transportation and other supports. • Opportunity cost of education compared to employment in a vibrant economy. • Rural Albertans face additional economic barriers (including transportation and housing) of relocating to attend advanced education. • Process to access financial support is sometimes confusing and cumbersome.
Institutional Admission Criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of recognition of prior learning gained through life and work experiences. • Individuals may lack 1 or 2 courses or not have a high enough grade point average.

¹⁰ Budget 2010 <http://www.budget.gc.ca/2010/plan/chap3c-eng.html>. Accessed on Oct 2, 2012

Chapter 3 - Summary and Analysis of Student Performance

As part of our background research, based on data provided by Alberta Education, we completed an analysis of high school graduation, drop-out and other performance indicators as well as student provincial achievement test results in Northern Alberta.

We believe our analysis that follows is of relevance to this project in terms of identifying foundational learning needs and gaps and helping to develop a coordinated effort to address the problem.

I. High School Students

A. Graduation Rates

We have chosen, for illustrative purposes to focus on 3-year high school graduation rates. While 4-year and 5-year rates with data going back to the 2007 school year (available in electronic form) might present a better picture of eventual graduation, in our view, the 3-year rates for the past three years provide a tangible benchmark and common reference for the analysis of this issue.

General Trends

The following table provides a graphic depiction of high school graduation rates in the NADC region over the past three years compared to the province-wide average.

3 Year High School Graduation General Trends

	Declining	Stable	Increasing
Below Provincial Average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspen View • Fort McMurray Public • Fort Vermillion • Grande Prairie • Grande Prairie Catholic • Northern Lights • Northland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace River • Peace Wapiti • St Paul • Northern Gateway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High Prairie • Holy Family Catholic • Pembina
Above Provincial Average	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Northwest Francophone 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Central Francophone • Evergreen Catholic • Fort McMurray Roman Catholic • Grande Yellowhead • Lakeland Roman Catholic • Living Waters

Specific Data

The provincial average 3-year graduation rate ranged from approximately 72% to 74% over the period 2008-09 to 2010-11. However, the addition of quantifiable data adds considerable richness to the analysis and demonstrates the vast range of graduations rates. Northland School Division, with a 3-year graduation rate of between approximately 13% and 22%, clearly has the most room for improvement. At the other extreme, certain Catholic Districts, such as East Central Francophone and Evergreen have a track record of graduation rates higher than the provincial average, and others such as Grande Yellowhead and Living Waters have experienced strong results with their efforts to increase graduation rates.

The following table provides a summary of 3-year high school graduation rates for the period 2008-09 to 2010-11 for School Districts within the NADC region.

**NADC Region 3-Year High School Graduation Rates
2008-09 to 2010-11**

Jurisdiction Name	2008-09 %	2009-10 %	2010-11 %
Aspen View Regional Division No. 19	73.2	71.4	70.6
East Central Francophone Education Region No. 3	83.3	89.0	86.7
Evergreen Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 2	77.1	81.0	89.9
Fort McMurray Public School District No. 2833	74.9	70.6	73.1
Fort McMurray Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 32	67.3	74.9	77.8
Fort Vermilion School Division No. 52	58.6	56.2	57.0
Grande Prairie Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 28	72.3	75.7	71.5
Grande Prairie School District No. 2357	54.7	65.3	57.8
Grande Yellowhead Public School Division No. 77	72.4	75.4	82.3
Greater North Central Francophone Education Region No. 2	64.7	71.6	75.8
High Prairie School Division No. 48	54.7	53.7	61.4
Holy Family Catholic Regional Division No. 37	57.0	62.9	71.7
Lakeland Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 150	79.1	78.7	85.3
Living Waters Catholic Regional Division No. 42	73.7	72.4	82.5
Northern Gateway Regional Division No. 10	72.9	67.3	73.9
Northern Lights School Division No. 69	64.2	61.7	62.2
Northland School Division No. 61	22.8	13.5	17.5
Peace River School Division No. 10	67.3	71.5	69.0
Peace Wapiti School Division No. 76	71.3	68.2	70.2
Pembina Hills Regional Division No. 7	70.4	71.1	76.0
St. Paul Education Regional Division No. 1	66.6	69.2	68.0
Provincial Average	71.5	72.6	74.1

(Source: Developed from data provided by Alberta Education)

B. Drop-out Rates

Generally speaking, high school drop-out rates have been declining (improving) in School Districts within the NADC region over the past three years. Compared to the provincial average, which declined from 4.3% in 2008-09 to 3.2% in 2010-11, the most noteworthy improvements have been in:

- Fort McMurray Public (6.5% in 2008-09 to 1.0% in 2010-11);
- Holy Family Catholic (6.6% in 2008-09 to 2.9% in 2010-11);
- Northern Lights (6.5% in 2008-09 to 3.7% in 2010-11);
- Peace River (7.2% in 2008-09 to 5.4% in 2010-11); and
- Pembina Hills (8.1% in 2008-09 to 5.4% in 2010-11).

However, there are still two School Districts in which the drop-out rate remains very high. They include:

- Fort Vermillion (an increase from 8.7% in 2008-09 to 9.5% in 2010-11); and

- Northland (declining but still very high at 18.0% in 2008-09 and 15.0%) in 2010-11).

The following table provides a summary of high school drop-out rates for the period 2008-09 to 2010-11 by School District and comparison to the provincial average for the period.

**NADC Region 3-Year High School Drop-out Rates (%)
2008-09 to 2010-11**

Jurisdiction Name	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Aspen View Regional Division No. 19	5.0	6.2	3.8
East Central Francophone Education Region No. 3	0.4	1.7	1.0
Evergreen Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 2	0.5	2.1	2.1
Fort McMurray Public School District No. 2833	6.5	4.8	1.0
Fort McMurray Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 32	4.4	3.1	1.7
<i>Fort Vermilion School Division No. 52</i>	8.7	8.6	9.5
Grande Prairie Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 28	3.2	3.5	1.8
Grande Prairie School District No. 2357	5.9	5.4	4.1
Grande Yellowhead Public School Division No. 77	1.3	1.9	1.4
Greater North Central Francophone Education Region No. 2	2.3	6.0	2.4
<i>High Prairie School Division No. 48</i>	9.0	6.5	6.7
Holy Family Catholic Regional Division No. 37	6.6	5.5	2.9
Lakeland Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 150	1.9	1.4	0.6
Living Waters Catholic Regional Division No. 42	4.5	2.4	1.8
Northern Gateway Regional Division No. 10	4.7	5.0	3.3
Northern Lights School Division No. 69	6.5	6.3	3.7
<i>Northland School Division No. 61</i>	18.0	15.1	15.0
<i>Peace River School Division No. 10</i>	7.2	5.1	5.4
Peace Wapiti School Division No. 76	4.5	3.4	2.7
<i>Pembina Hills Regional Division No. 7</i>	8.1	7.0	5.4
St. Paul Education Regional Division No. 1	4.7	4.7	4.1
Provincial Average	4.3	4.2	3.2

(Source: Developed from data provided by Alberta Education)

C. 6-Year High School Transition Rates

The 6-Year Transition Rate is the percentage of students who proceed on to postsecondary education within six years of starting Grade 10 (or within three years of when one might be expected to finish a three year high school program).

For 2011, Province-wide, the average 6-Year Transition Rate for all students was 59.3% in 2011 and the comparable figure for First Nation, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) students was 31.2%. FNMI 6-Year Transition rates were particularly poor at the following School Districts: Grande Prairie 2357 (16.8%); Northland (18.9%); and Evergreen (19.4%).

The following table provides a summary and comparison of 6-Year High School Transition rates for the Overall and FNMI student populations for each School District within the NADC region and makes comparisons to the comparable Province-wide averages.

Summary and Comparison of 6-Year High School Transition Rates for 2011

6 Year Transition Rate (2011)	Overall (%)	FNMI (%)
Aspen View Regional Division No. 19	58.3	45.1
East-Central Francophone Education Region No. 3	74.0	Not Av
Evergreen Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 2	63.5	19.4
Fort McMurray Public School District No. 2833	53.1	40.5
Fort McMurray Roman Catholic Separate No. 32	56.7	50.8
Fort Vermillion School Division No. 52	32.9	34.3
Grande Prairie Roman Catholic Separate No. 28	64.1	44.4
Grande Prairie School District No. 2357	45.8	16.8
Grande Yellowhead Public School Division No. 77	49.1	29.4
Greater North Central Francophone Education Region No. 2	78.2	Not Av
High Prairie School Division No. 48	53.5	31.9
Holy Family Catholic Regional Division No. 37	51.0	36.4
Lakeland Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 150	70.7	74.1
Living Waters Catholic Regional Division No. 42	42.7	Not Av
Northern Gateway Regional Division No. 10	44.4	21.7
Northern Lights School Division No. 69	56.9	50.5
Northland School Division No. 61	14.4	18.9
Northwest Francophone Education Region No. 1	72.3	Not Av
Peace River School Division No. 10	56.2	28.9
Peace Wapiti School Division No. 76	53.0	40.5
Pembina Hills Regional Division No. 7	49.9	Not Av
St. Paul Education Regional Division No. 1	55.2	47.4
Provincial Average	59.3	31.2

(Source: Developed from data provided by Alberta Education)

D. Grade 12 Diploma Exams

Province-wide, the percentage of Grade 12 students writing four or more diploma exams (to receive senior matriculation) is low (approximately 55%) and the comparable figure for First Nation, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) students is 19%. In Northern Alberta, generally speaking, with the exception of several Catholic and Francophone School Districts (with rates ranging from approximately 60% to approximately 75%), the percentage of students taking Grade 12 exams is lower and in the range of 30% to 45%. School Districts with especially low scores include Fort Vermillion (26.1%) and Northland (3.4%). With regard to FNMI students, in all instances, the participation rate was consistently below the provincial average; however, there was a considerable range from a low of 1.1% of FNMI students in Northland to a high of 43.9% for students at Lakeland Catholic.

With regard to the percentage of students receiving Acceptable scores, the difference between the Provincial Averages for the Overall (82.6%) and FNMI (77.7%) is not significant. Overall, scores at Francophone schools were slightly higher than the averages and FNMI scores at some Catholic School Districts such as Lakeland (90.0% compared to 83.8%), Fort McMurray (82.4% compared to 79.3%) and

Living Waters (85.7% compared to 79.9%). The School Districts with particularly low Acceptable scores for FNMI students were: Northland (45.7% but still higher than the Overall score of 42.9%); Grande Prairie 2357 (65.6%) and Fort Vermillion (66.7%). The data may suggest that, generally speaking, FNMI students who take the tests end up with higher scores than the overall student population and provide an additional argument that this “potential resource pool” is not being optimized.

For 2011, the following table provides a summary of the percentage of Overall and FNMI Grade 12 students participating in four or more Diploma Exams and the percentage receiving acceptable scores for each School District and compares them to Provincial Averages.

Comparison of Grade 12 Diploma Exam Participation and Acceptable Rates (2011)

Diploma Exam (4+ Exams)	Participation		Acceptable	
	Overall	FNMI	Overall	FNMI
Aspen View Regional Division No. 19	48.1	28.2	75.3	72.7
East-Central Francophone Education Region No. 3	74.7	N/A	95.1	N/A
Evergreen Catholic Separate No. 2	66.8	N/A	83.7	79.2
Fort McMurray Public School District No. 2833	35.5	11.4	85.9	85.9
Fort McMurray Roman Catholic Separate no. 32	42.3	20.9	79.3	82.4
Fort Vermillion School Division No. 52	26.1	6.4	78.8	66.7
Grande Prairie Roman Catholic Separate No. 28	63.1	11.7	76.6	NA
Grande Prairie School District No. 2357	44.2	32.4	74.1	65.6
Grande Yellowhead Public School Division No. 77	44.3	13.7	82.6	86.7
Greater North Central Francophone No. 2	60.2	N/A	75.3	N/A
High Prairie School Division No. 48	31.7	12.3	79.9	76.9
Holy Family Catholic Regional Division No. 37	39.6	24.8	81.1	77.3
Lakeland Roman Catholic No. 150	64.0	43.9	83.8	90.0
Living Waters Catholic Regional Division No. 42	43.8	26.3	79.9	85.7
Northern Gateway Regional Division No. 10	44.2	31.0	81.5	80.7
Northern Lights School Division No. 69	42.3	21.9	73.9	70.9
Northland School Division No. 61	3.4	1.1	42.9	45.7
Northwest Francophone Education Region No. 1	70.0	N/A	61.1	N/A
Peace River School Division No. 10	38.0	13.1	76.3	71.1
Peace Wapiti School Division No. 76	40.7	26.7	72.7	71.8
Pembina Hills Regional Division No. 7	44.6	10.1	87.0	NA
St. Paul Education Regional Division No. 1	41.9	12.2	79.4	78.4
Provincial Average	54.9	19.1	82.6	77.7

(Source: Developed from data provided by Alberta Education)

E. Work Preparation

An additional, but optional, factor tracked by School Boards is called “Work Preparation”, which is considered to be an indicator of whether students have been taught attitudes and behaviours that will make them successful at work when they finish school. Ratings provided by both teachers and parents are reported. The Provincial average of the score provided by teachers is approximately 90% and we

note that with the exception of Fort McMurray Catholic (75.5%) and Northlands (73.0%), the ratings provided by teachers within most other School Districts (as might be expected) are not significantly different from the Provincial Average. However, there appears to be a significant difference from teacher ratings in the way that parents view the preparation of their children for work. The Provincial Average is 70.6% with substantially lower than average scores given by parents in the Northern Lights School Division (58.8%). On the other hand, parents in Francophone School Districts provided a substantially higher than average rating including 83.3% within East Central, 82.0% within Great North Central and 91.3% for Northwest Francophone. The reasons for the differences in scores are unknown and beyond the scope of this project but may warrant further review.

The following table provides a summary of Teacher and Parent Work Preparation scores for each School District in 2011 and compares them to Provincial Averages.

Summary of Optional 2011 Teacher and Parent Work Preparation Ratings

Work Preparation (2011)	Teacher	Parent
Aspen View Regional Division No. 19	91.3	65.5
East-Central Francophone Education Region No. 3	96.1	83.3
Evergreen Catholic Separate Regional Division No. 2	93.6	69.2
Fort McMurray Public School District No. 2833	87.4	70.0
Fort McMurray Roman Catholic Separate no. 32	75.5	77.8
Fort Vermilion School Division No. 52		
Grande Prairie Roman Catholic Separate No. 28	94.3	68.2
Grande Prairie School District No. 2357		
Grande Yellowhead Public School Division No. 77	95.1	64.6
Greater North Central Francophone Education Region No. 2	91.0	82.0
High Prairie School Division No. 48	87.8	65.0
Holy Family Catholic Regional Division No. 37		
Lakeland Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 150		
Living Waters Catholic Regional Division No. 42		
Northern Gateway Regional Division No. 10		
Northern Lights School Division No. 69	84.6	58.4
Northland School Division No. 61	73.0	70.1
Northwest Francophone Education Region No. 1	100.0	91.3
Peace River School Division No. 10		
Peace Wapiti School Division No. 76		
Pembina Hills Regional Division No. 7	89.9	68.8
St. Paul Education Regional Division No. 1	86.0	71.7
Provincial Average	89.6	70.6

(Source: Developed from data provided by Alberta Education)

II. Elementary and Junior High Students

A. Achievement Test Results by School District

As part of our analysis, we completed a review of Alberta Achievement Test results (Grades 3, 6 and 9) for instances in which there were **100 or more students within the School District taking the test**. While a detailed course by course analysis for each District is beyond the scope of this project, a number of trends are apparent as discussed below:

- Northern Alberta students had the worst test results for Mathematics 9 and Social Studies 9. For these two courses, the proportion of students who scored “Below Acceptable” ranged from a high of 73% for Mathematics within Northland School Division to a low of 20% within Pembina Hills. For Social Studies 9, the School District with the highest proportion of students scoring “Below Acceptable” was 40% within Northern Lights School District, while the School District having the “best” results for the subject was Evergreen at 22%.
- Test results, while still with a likely higher than “Acceptable” rating were best in Elementary Language Arts subjects, where at the Grade 3 level, the “best results (3% “Below Acceptable”) were within the Evergreen Catholic Division and the “worst” results (29% “Below Acceptable”) were within the Northland School Division.
- A common observation, based on the data available, is that the results declined as students became older and entered junior high. More research may be desirable to explore this “phenomenon”.

The detailed results by School District and exam are summarized in the following tables.

Aspen View Regional Division No. 19			Evergreen Catholic Separate Regional Div No. 2		
Subject	Writing	Below	Subject	Writing	Below
Mathematics 9	228	40%	Mathematics 9	228	26%
Social Studies 9	240	34%	Social Studies 9	225	22%
Mathematics 6	196	32%	Social Studies 6	273	17%
Social Studies 6	196	30%	Science 9	228	14%
Science 9	236	24%	English Lang Arts 9	225	10%
Science 6	195	20%	Science 6	273	9%
English Lang Arts 9	253	17%	English Lang Arts 3	300	8%
English Lang Arts 3	214	13%			
English Lang Arts 6	225	12%			

Fort McMurray Public School District No. 2833			Fort McMurray Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 32		
Subject	Writing	Below	Subject	Writing	Below
Mathematics 9	302	35%	Science 9	239	27%
Social Studies 9	318	33%	English Lang Arts 9	253	19%
Science 9	330	27%	Social Studies 6	294	12%
Social Studies 6	278	24%	Science 6	293	8%
Science 6	277	22%	English Lang Arts 3	341	4%
Mathematics 6	276	21%	English Lang Arts 6	313	3%
English Lang Arts 9	333	14%			
English Lang Arts 6	304	11%			
English Lang Arts 3	320	6%			

Fort Vermilion School Division No. 52

Subject	Writing	Below
Mathematics 9	175	46%
Social Studies 6	227	35%
Social Studies 9	171	32%
Science 9	174	22%
Science 6	227	16%
English Lang Arts 3	247	13%
English Lang Arts 6	226	12%
English Lang Arts 9	175	10%

Grande Prairie School District No. 2357

Subject	Writing	Below
Mathematics 9	374	33%
Social Studies 6	377	32%
Social Studies 9	369	29%
Mathematics 6	372	24%
Science 6	375	22%
Science 9	373	17%
English Lang Arts 3	439	11%
English Lang Arts 6	402	9%

Holy Family Catholic Regional Division No. 37

Subject	Writing	Below
Social Studies 9	158	32%
Social Studies 6	150	30%
Science 9	157	28%
Science 6	148	22%
English Lang Arts 9	170	19%
English Lang Arts 6	177	10%
English Lang Arts 3	155	6%

Lakeland Roman Catholic Separate School District No. 150

Subject	Writing	Below
Social Studies 9	110	34%
Mathematics 9	123	33%
English Lang Arts 3	126	24%
Science 9	125	23%
English Lang Arts 9	147	14%
English Lang Arts 6	134	10%

Living Waters Catholic Regional Division No. 42

Subject	Writing	Below
Social Studies 6	114	22%
Science 6	114	14%
English Lang Arts 6	129	8%
English Lang Arts 3	113	7%

Northern Gateway Regional Division No. 10

Subject	Writing	Below
Mathematics 9	316	33%
Social Studies 9	341	32%
Social Studies 6	378	31%
Science 6	377	26%
Mathematics 6	373	24%
Science 9	350	20%
English Lang Arts 9	345	14%
English Lang Arts 6	372	11%

Northern Lights School Division No. 69

Subject	Writing	Below
Mathematics 9	343	40%
Social Studies 9	348	40%
Mathematics 9	343	40%
Science 9	372	34%
Social Studies 6	392	27%
English Lang Arts 9	348	24%
Science 6	392	24%
English Lang Arts 3	369	16%
English Lang Arts 6	394	14%

Northland School Division No. 61

Subject	Writing	Below
Social Studies 6	148	73%
Mathematics 6	149	68%
Science 6	148	58%
Mathematics 3	160	42%
English Lang Arts 6	149	39%
English Lang Arts 3	157	29%

Peace River School Division No. 10			Peace Wapiti School Division No. 76		
Subject	Writing	Below	Subject	Writing	Below
Science 6	190	29%	Mathematics 9	369	40%
Science 9	226	25%	Social Studies 9	362	36%
English Lang Arts 3	230	14%	Mathematics 9	369	40%
English Lang Arts 6	204	14%	Social Studies 6	357	34%
English Lang Arts 9	227	14%	Mathematics 6	354	26%
			Science 9	371	26%
			Science 6	356	20%
			English Lang Arts 9	373	17%
			Mathematics 3	381	17%
			English Lang Arts 6	355	16%
			English Lang Arts 3	376	9%

Pembina Hills Regional Division No. 7			St. Paul Education Regional Division No. 1		
Subject	Writing	Below	Subject	Writing	Below
Social Studies 9	262	32%	Social Studies 9	215	37%
Social Studies 6	270	23%	Social Studies 6	289	35%
Mathematics 9	279	20%	Mathematics 9	213	33%
Science 6	267	18%	Science 9	234	29%
Science 9	284	12%	Mathematics 6	287	27%
English Lang Arts 9	289	11%	Mathematics 3	235	21%
English Lang Arts 6	295	8%	Science 6	283	21%
English Lang Arts 3	281	6%	English Lang Arts 9	242	16%
			English Lang Arts 3	264	13%
			English Lang Arts 6	305	13%

B. Achievement Test Results by Census Division

Achievement Test results were also compiled by Census Division. The following table presents a summary by Census Division and with comparison to NADC region and province-wide data for each exam. Also shown are the Number of writers ("N") and the percentage of students whose results were considered to be "Acceptable" ("A"). Instances where results were significantly below the provincial average (generally approximately 15% or more) are highlighted and in bold numbers.

Note:

Please reference following note regarding School District and Census Division mapping and overlays, which may call for some caution in the use of the data.

Jurisdiction Name	Census Division(s)	Jurisdiction Name	Census Division(s)
Holy Family	17, 18, 19	Aspen View	12, 13, 17
Living Waters Catholic	13, 17	St. Paul	12
Evergreen Catholic	13	Northern Gateway	13, 18
Peace Wapiti	18, 19	Grande Prairie No. 2357	19
Peace River	17, 19	Fort McMurray	16
Grande Yellowhead Public	13, 18	Lakeland Roman	12
Pembina Hills	13, 17	Grande Prairie Roman Catholic	19
High Prairie School Division No. 48	17, 19	Fort McMurray Roman Catholic	16
Northern Lights School Division No. 69	12	Greater North Cent Francophone	16
Fort Vermilion School Division No. 52	17	Northwest Francophone Education	19
Northland School Division No. 61	12, 16, 17, 18	East Central Francophone	12

Summary of Achievement Test Results by Census Division
N=Number of Writers/A=% Considered "Acceptable"

	CD 12		CD 13		CD 16		CD 17		CD 18		CD 19		Combined		Provincial	
	N	A	N	A	N	A	N	A	N	A	N	A	N	A	N	A
English Language Arts 3	986	75.9	782	86.7	755	86.4	760	62.5	217	74.2	1,482	85.2	4,982	79.8	42,944	81.8
French Language Arts 3	93	76.3	76	71.1	62	91.9					162	85.8	393	81.7	3,180	80.6
Francais 3	49	71.4			*	*					37	97.3	94	83.0	532	84.2
English Language Arts 6	1,003	76.9	880	85.1	712	85.4	707	60.8	250	70.8	1,438	84.1	4,990	79.1	43,433	83.0
French Language Arts 6	76	78.9	72	94.4	50	92.0					138	89.1	336	88.4	2,635	89.4
Français 6	54	85.2			*	*					33	90.9	97	87.6	460	92.2
Science 6	999	66.6	879	76.7	709	78.4	716	54.3	248	49.6	1,432	74.3	4,983	69.7	43,441	76.2
Social Studies 6	1,003	60.9	880	70.2	712	74.2	719	43.4	250	46.8	1,438	65.2	5,002	62.4	43,537	71.1
English Language Arts 9	948	69.8	947	73.8	671	74.8	662	54.4	194	68.0	1,476	77.6	4,898	71.5	43,024	79.1
English Lang Arts 9 KAE	86	57.0	40	75.0	46	71.7	55	49.1	21	71.4	28	71.4	276	63.0	1,606	67.2
French Language Arts 9	53	84.9	28	85.7	44	70.5					107	89.7	232	84.5	2,331	88.8
Français 9	57	84.2			*	*					18	94.4	82	87.8	336	90.2
Mathematics 9 KAE	104	56.7	87	78.2	60	73.3	59	50.8	28	60.7	32	46.9	370	63.0	1,936	64.9
Science 9	966	62.3	931	72.3	680	65.6	660	47.1	194	63.9	1,471	72.1	4,902	65.6	42,932	74.9
Science 9 KAE	78	59.0	51	78.4	36	72.2	59	59.3	19	63.2	28	75.0	271	66.4	1,586	69.5
Social Studies 9	965	53.2	944	59.1	688	57.4	678	38.5	193	51.3	1,481	61.0	4,949	55.2	43,128	67.2
Social Studies 9 KAE	91	44.0	43	69.8	36	61.1	56	44.6	21	61.9	28	67.9	275	54.2	1,573	61.9

(Source: Developed from data provided by Alberta Education)

Note: Results that are significantly below the Provincial Average (approximately 15% or more) are Highlighted and bolded.

Chapter 4 – Occupational and Skills Analysis

To foster optimal success, the foundational learning programs need to also instill skills that are 1) demand oriented, 2) provide a pathway forward for students/clients and 3) with content for which students/clients can appreciate the immediate relevance.

Given the above, we undertook an analysis of major occupations that are expected to experience above average rates of growth over the next 5 years and for which the educational or skills requirements were relatively low (suitable as an entry point for foundational learning students) and then cross-referenced the occupations with the skills required for each. A discussion of our methodology and findings is presented below.

Occupation Determination

To define “relatively low”, we referred to the National Occupational Classification Matrix¹¹ developed by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) which provides the following definitions:

- Skill Level C: Usually require secondary school and/or occupation specific training.
- Skills level D: On the job training is usually provided.

The employment demand forecasts produced by Alberta Human Services were used to identify the 3 digit occupation groups that have above average growth in Northern Alberta.¹² In each of the 3 digit occupation groups with above average growth, the more detailed occupations within each of these groups (4 digit NOC) that had a substantial amount of existing employment (i.e. more than 100) were identified for inclusion in the analysis. Based on these criteria, as detailed in the following table, we identified a number of Skill Level C and Skill Level D 4-digit NOC occupations for which in our view the potential for mutually satisfactory and beneficial outcomes for both students/clients and industry/employers was high with the appropriate type of Foundation Learning.

Occupations for Potential Linkages with Foundational Learning Programming in Northern Alberta

Occupational Category	Level	Occupational Category	Level
Heavy Equipment Operators (Except Crane)	C	Food and Beverage Servers	C
Administrative Clerks	C	Bartenders	C
Automotive Mechanical Installers and Servicers	C/D	General Office Clerks	C
Construction Trades Helpers and Labourers	D	Light Duty Cleaners	D
Residential and Commercial Installers and Servicers	C	Janitors, Caretakers and Superintendents	D
Accounting and Related Clerks	C	Payroll Clerks	C
Customer Service Representatives - Financial	C	Receptionists and Switchboard Operators	C
Customer Service, Information and Related Clerks	C	Specialized Cleaners	D
Other Trades Helpers and Labourers	D	Hotel Front Desk Clerks	C

Skill Requirements

We then cross-referenced the occupations with the skills required for each. In this regard, HRSDC has collected a listing of essential skills profiles for over 350 of the most common occupations at the 4 digit

¹¹ Government of Canada, Matrix, *Human Resources and Social Development Canada*, <http://www30.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2006/html/Matrix.html>

¹² The NADC area has been approximated using data from two Economic Regions: the Athabasca/ Grande Prairie/ Peace River/ Economic region and the Wood Buffalo/ Cold Lake Economic Region

NOC.¹³ Each Profile provides information on all the nine essential skills and how they are used within that occupational group. However, it is noted that:

- All of the skills may not be of equal importance for each occupation.
- There are many ways in which the skill might be used for a particular occupation.
- There are varying levels or degrees of difficulty for each occupation with in Skill Level (C or D).

The outcome of our analysis is presented below.

Most Important Essential Skills

There are certain essential skills that are considered to be more important for others for particular occupations. For the Skill Level C and Skill Level D occupations identified, the following table presents a summary of the frequency of the number of times that an essential skill was identified as being “most important”.

Frequency Count for Most Important Essential Skills

MIES Category	Skill Level C	Skill Level D
Reading Text		6
Document Use	2	2
Writing Skills		1
Numeracy	9	2
Oral Communication	10	12
Thinking Skills: Problem Solving	5	10
Thinking Skills: Decision Making		1
Thinking Skills: Critical Thinking		
Thinking Skills: Job Task Planning and Organizing	4	
Thinking Skills: Significant Use of Memory		
Thinking Skills: Finding Information		
Working With Others		
Computer Use		
Continuous Learning		

A discussion of how these essential skills are defined by HRSDC is presented in the Addendum to this Chapter.

Context of Essential Skills and Difficulty Rating

Furthermore, for each essential skill there are multiple ways it might be used in an occupational setting (for example, up to 132 for “Oral Communication” or 20 for “Reading Text”) and varying associated degrees of difficulty for each, on a scale of “1”(low difficulty) to “5” (high difficulty).

The following table provide insight as to the context or complexity of how essential skills might be applied for a particular occupation and an indicator of the average degree of difficulty.

¹³ Government of Canada, Essential Skills Profiles, Human Resources and Social Development Canada, http://www10.hrsdc.gc.ca/es/English/all_profiles.aspx

Usage and Degree of Difficulty for the Identified Occupations

Skill Level “C” Occupations	Skills Utilization	Average Difficulty
Reading Text	11/20	1.99
Document Use	9/22	2.11
Writing Skills	8/21	1.50
Numeracy: Tasks	4/5	2.07
Numeracy: Mathematical Foundations Used	12/20	N/A
Oral Communication: Purpose	35/132	N/A
Oral Communication: Modes of Communication	3/4	1.82
Thinking Skills	1/6	1.85
Working with Others	7/12	N/A
Computer Use	4/11	1.79
Skill Level “D” Occupations	Skill Utilization	Average Difficulty
Reading Text	11/20	1.84
Document Use	12/22	2.06
Writing Skills	6/21	1.43
Numeracy: Tasks	5/5	2.02
Numeracy: Mathematical Foundations Used	12/20	N/A
Oral Communication: Purpose	29/132	N/A
Oral Communication: Modes of Communication	4/4	1.55
Thinking Skills	1/6	1.61
Working with Others	8/12	N/A
Computer Use	3/11	1.36

Concluding Comments

The above analysis is suggestive of the types and skills and associated difficulty ratings for occupations that we believe may hold the best prospects for pathways, especially for “lower skilled” individuals who may need to “ladder” eventually to higher skills.

In the absence of better information, we believe that the information contained in this Chapter provides a viable basis for beginning to plan the context of curriculums and beginning to establish better linkages with industry and employers.

Addendum – Skills Definition

This Addendum provides a brief description/definition of the nine key Essential Skills based on the Human Resources and Skills Development Canada guide.¹⁴

- **Reading Text:** refers to reading material that is in the form of sentences or paragraphs. It generally involves reading notes, letters, memos, manuals, specifications, regulations, books, reports or journals.
- **Document Use:** refers to tasks that involve a variety of information displays in which words, numbers, icons and other visual characteristics (e.g., line, colour, shape) are given meaning by their spatial arrangement. For example, graphs, lists, tables, blueprints, schematics, drawings, signs and labels are documents used in the world of work. It includes print and non-print media (for example, computer screen or microfiche documents, equipment gauges, clocks and flags)
- **Writing Skills:** Includes: writing texts and writing in documents (for example, filling in forms), non-paper-based writing (for example, typing on a computer)
- **Numeracy:** refers to the workers' use of numbers and their being required to think in quantitative terms. It includes numerical calculation (Money Math, Scheduling or Budgeting, and Accounting Math, Measurement and Calculation Math, Data Analysis Math) and estimation.
- **Oral Communication:** pertains primarily to the use of speech to give and exchange thoughts and information by workers in an occupational group.
- **Thinking Skills:** Thinking Skills differentiates between six different types of cognitive functions. However, these functions are interconnected.
 - Problem Solving: involves problems that require solutions. Most problems concern mechanical challenges, people or situations.
 - Decision Making: Decision making refers to making a choice among options. Decision making occurs during problem solving, but not all decision making is part of problem solving. It is, therefore, presented as a separate thinking skill.
 - Job Task Planning and Organizing: refers to the extent to which the workers plan and organize their own tasks. It does not refer to involvement in the planning function for the organization in which they work.
 - Significant Use of Memory: includes any significant or unusual use of memory for workers in the occupational group. It does not include normal memory use that is a requirement for every occupation.
 - Finding Information: involves using any of a variety of sources including text, people, computerized databases or information systems. Finding Information is highlighted in this section of the Profile as an essential job skill. However, workers' use of various information sources may be referred to in other sections such as *A. Reading Text*, *B. Document Use*, *E. Oral Communication* and *H. Computer Use*
- **Working with Others:** examines the extent to which employees work with others to carry out their tasks. Do they have to work co-operatively with others? Do they have to have the self-discipline to meet work targets while working alone?
- **Computer Use:** indicates the variety and complexity of computer use within the occupational group.
- **Continuous Learning:** examines the requirement for workers in an occupational group to participate in an ongoing process of acquiring skills and knowledge.

Continuous Learning tests the hypothesis that more and more jobs require continuous upgrading, and that all workers must continue learning in order to keep or to grow with their jobs. If this is true, then the following will become essential skills:

- Knowing how to learn;
- Understanding one's own learning style; and
- Knowing how to gain access to a variety of materials, resources and learning opportunities.

¹⁴ Government of Canada, Readers' Guide, *Human Resources and Social Development Canada*, http://www.rhdcc-hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/workplaceskills/LES/tools_resources/tools_audience/general/readers_guide_whole.shtml

Chapter 5 – Business Case Outlining the Need for Additional Foundational Learning

This business case for the need for additional foundational learning in Northern Alberta has been developed from three perspectives:

- The existing skills gap;
- The importance in relation to the goals and objectives of the three key Government of Alberta Ministries (Human Services, Enterprise and Advanced Education, and Education); and
- An economic argument that also includes a cost-benefit analysis of an “intervention” (expenditure) to address the problem.

I. The Existing Skills Gap

The existing skills gap is viewed from two perspectives:

- The “gap” in the proportion of Northern Albertans with a high school diploma; and
- Other indicators of academic preparation including Alberta Education Achievement Test results and a variety of indicators pertaining to high school outcomes.

A. The High School Diploma “Gap”

As the 2011 Census has not been fully compiled from the perspective of educational considerations, we used data from the 2006 Census to determine the number of NADC region residents aged 15 and over without a high school diploma and made comparisons to province-wide data. In this analysis, we have gone to considerable effort to accurately reflect the specific data within the part of Census Division 13 that is within the NADC region, requiring adjustments for Athabasca and Woodlands Counties and the town of Whitecourt.

Based upon the data, approximately 32% of NADC region residents (approximately 75,000) did not have a high school diploma. This compares to a province-wide figure of 23%, or approximately 614,000. If there were a goal to increase Northern Alberta education levels (as measured by high school graduation) to province-wide levels, there would be a need to assist approximately 22,000 individuals. We call this difference the “high school diploma gap”.

The following table provides additional detail as to the scope of the “high school diploma gap” for each full Census Division and portions of Census Division 13 (Athabasca County, Woodlands County and the town of Whitecourt) within the NADC region.

**The High School Diploma Gap
(Based on Population 15 Years and Over)**

	Total Population	No Credential	Proportion of Total	Gap (Based on Provincial Average)
CD 12	45,320	15,090	0.33	(4,666)
Athabasca	6,095	2,030	.38	(628)
Woodlands	3,265	1,270	.39	(519)
Whitecourt	6,820	2,190	.32	(621)
CD 16	42,155	8,885	0.21	667
CD 17	41,530	20,040	0.48	(10,488)
CD 18	10,795	3,915	0.36	(1,432)
CD 19	76,470	21,980	0.29	(4,391)
Subtotal	232,450	75,400	0.32	(22,078)
Alberta	2,625,145	614,865	0.23	0

The largest subcomponent of the gap is in Census Division 17, which is more remote and more sparsely populated than other areas of Northern Alberta.

When the Aboriginal population of the NADC region is isolated, the data reveals that, on average, approximately 54% of the Aboriginal population over the age of 15 years does not have a high school diploma. On this basis, the Aboriginal High School Diploma gap is approximately 11,500 or 52% of the overall NADC region total of 22,078. Again, the largest portion of the “gap” is in sparsely populated and remote Census Division 17.

In comparison, province-wide, there were an estimated 57,490 Aboriginal Albertans over 15 years of age who did not have a high school diploma, and this figure is equal to 44 % of the total of 129,745. On this basis, the province-wide Aboriginal high school diploma gap is equal to approximately 27,600. However, of this total, approximately 11,500 (42 %) are associated with Aboriginals within the NADC region. NADC region Aboriginals constitute approximately 18.4% of the total Alberta Aboriginal population and only 4.5% of the province’s total population.

The following table provides additional detail as to the scope of the “Aboriginal high school diploma gap” within the NADC region.

**The Aboriginal High School Diploma Gap
(Based on Population 15 Years and Over)**

	Total Population	No Credential	Proportion of Total	Aboriginal Gap (Based on Provincial Average)
CD 12	8,515	4,305	.51	(2,346)
Athabasca	510	195	.38	(78)
Woodlands	Not Av	Not Av	Not Av	See note below
Whitecourt	620	430	.85	(287)
CD 16	5,120	2,115	.41	(937)
CD 17	14,730	9,635	.65	(6,247)
CD 18	1,600	900	.56	(532)
CD 19	6,020	2,500	.41	(1,115)
Subtotal	37,115	20,080	.54	(11,543)
Alberta	129,745	57,490	.44	27,649

Note Regarding Woodlands County:

Figure is relatively insignificant as Aboriginal population of Woodlands County was only 250.

B. Indicators of Academic Preparation

Generally speaking, the academic preparation of many Northern Albertans to succeed in postsecondary studies, compared to Albertans in general, is relatively poor. A number of indicators are discussed briefly below:

- As reflected by the results of Alberta Education Achievement test results at the Grade 3, 6 and 9 levels, many Northern Albertan students struggle. The most significant weaknesses appear to be in the subjects of Math and Social Studies, subjects for which the results are generally consistently poor and in some School Districts, the percentage of students with “Unacceptable” ratings is as high as 70%. Results for tests of English Language skills were often better in earlier years (Grades 3 and 6) but generally also deteriorated by Grade 9. A full exploration of the reasons contributing to the poor results is beyond the scope of this project; however, one can only speculate that a basis for success in later life is severely compromised.

- The high school performance of many Northern Albertans reflects more disappointment in a number of respects. While School Districts have worked very hard to address the problems, and are beginning to show signs of success and progress, as reflected by the indicators tracked by Alberta Education ¹⁵, there is still considerable scope for improvement as reflected by the following indicators:
 - **High School graduation rates** – while the Provincial Average has ranged from approximately 71% to 74% over the past three years, and a number of Northern Alberta School Districts have comparable or better statistics, there is still approximately one-third of the 22 School Districts where the High School graduation rate is considerably below the provincial average (as low as 13% in some instances).
 - **High School drop-out rates** – Province-wide, the high school drop-out rate has been improving in recent years (declining from 4.3% in 2008-09 to 3.2% in 2010-11); however, for some Northern Alberta School Districts, the rates are still as high as 15%.
 - **Postsecondary transition rates** – Province-wide, the 6-Year postsecondary transition rates in 2011 were approximately 59% for all students and 31% for First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) students. Again, while some School Districts, had rates that were better than the Provincial Average (which of itself is of concern, particularly for FNMI students), there were a number where the transition rate was very poor (between 15% and 20%).
 - **Grade 12 Diploma Exam participation rates and scores** – Province-wide, the Grade 12 Diploma Exam participation rate in 2011 was only 55% for all Grade 12 students and 19% for FNMI students. With few exceptions, the participation levels in Northern Alberta are below the Provincial Average and as low as 1% in some Northern Alberta School Districts. Province-wide, approximately 83% of writing students received “Acceptable” scores with the comparable rating for FNMI students being approximately 78%. The Northern Alberta results are interesting in that while generally speaking, the results are slightly lower than for the Province as a whole, there are a number of instances where the FNMI results are considerably better than the Provincial Averages.

More detailed data at the School District, Census Division and subject or specific indicator level was presented in Chapter 3 of this overall submission.

II. Importance in Relation to Key Government and Ministry Goals and Initiatives

The purpose of this section is to provide readers with an understanding of how an expansion of foundational learning in Northern Alberta aligns with (and is necessary to fulfill) the business plans of Government of Alberta the three principal Ministries that would be affected by its implementation: Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education; Alberta Education; and Alberta Human Services.

A. Importance for Achievement of Key Goals

In our view, an increase in the funding provided for foundational learning in Northern Alberta will be necessary to meet the following goals and objectives contained in the 2012-15 Strategic Plan for the Government of Alberta:

- Increase the percentage of participants employed after leaving income support programs to 70% by 2014-15 from 63% in 2010-11.
- Increase the high school completion rate of students within five years of entering grade 10 from the 79% in 2009-10 to 82% by 2014-15.
- Increase the percentage of students entering post-secondary programs (including apprenticeship) within six years of entering Grade 10 from 59.3% in 2009-10 to 61.0% by 2014-15.
- Increase the high school completion rate for Albertans aged 25-34 and postsecondary education completion rate for Albertans aged 25 to 64 from 90.7% in 2010-11 to 92.0% by 2014-15 and 62.0% in 2010-11 to 64.0% by 2014-15, respectively.

¹⁵ A “custom run” of data by School District and Census Division was provided by Alberta Education.

- Reduce the difference in the unemployment rate between on-reserve and off-reserve Aboriginals from 7.6 percentage points to 5.5 percentage points or less by 2014-15.

Further detail pertaining to Goals may be found in Chapter 2 - Environmental Scan of this report.

B. Alignment with Key initiatives

We also completed a review of the relevant Initiatives for each of the three ministries contained in 2012-15 Business Plans. These initiatives are at a greater level of detail than the Goals discussed in Chapter 2. Based upon our review, and knowledge gained from our earlier research, an assessment of the importance has been indicated using the following scale: High, Medium or Low.

Enterprise and Advanced Education

In completion of the subsection, it has been necessary to use the Business Plans of the “old” Advanced Education and Treasury Board and Enterprise:

- <http://www.finance.alberta.ca/publications/budget/budget2012/advanced-education-technology.pdf>
- <http://www.finance.alberta.ca/publications/budget/budget2012/treasury-board-and-enterprise.pdf>

Based on our assessment, an expansion of resources to address foundational learning in Northern Alberta will have a “High” level of importance for achievement of many of the “Advanced Education” side of the Ministry. A summary of our assessments is presented in the following table.

Summary of Alignment with “Advanced Education” Goals and Initiatives (2012)

Goal/Initiative	Level of Impact
Goal One: A globally recognized, quality advanced learning system that meets the needs of Alberta	
➤ 1.1 Meet the emerging needs of learners by enhancing the advanced learning system environment through innovative program delivery methods, support services and technology.	Medium
➤ 1.2 Facilitate collaborative multi-institution initiatives and improve system-wide efficiencies through Campus Alberta.	High
➤ 1.3 Implement strategies that align quality assurance, program approval and accountability mechanisms to promote excellence, innovation and sustainability within the advanced learning system.	Medium
➤ 1.4 Develop stronger community linkages through regional partnerships and collaboration among post-secondary and community partners.	High
➤ 1.5 Collaborate with the Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training Board to develop strategies to increase the supply of skilled trades people in Alberta.	High
➤ 1.6 Implement and support coordinated international education strategies to develop learners who can successfully engage in the global economy and contribute to Alberta’s prosperity.	High
Goal Three: A learner-centered, affordable advanced learning system accessible to Albertans	
➤ 3.1 Identify strategies to expand the recruitment of post-secondary students in rural areas, including those within Métis and First Nations communities.	High
➤ 3.2 Enhance learner pathways to ease the movement of learners into and throughout the advanced learning system.	High
➤ 3.3 Enhance the student funding program to better respond to learner needs and diverse learning pathways.	Medium
➤ 3.4 Align and coordinate education, training and learner support policies and programs with other government departments to improve efficiencies and create a seamless learning system.	High

The potential contribution to the achievement of “Enterprise” goals is also “High” in several instances.

A summary of our assessments is presented in the following table.

Summary of Alignment with “Enterprise” Goals and Initiatives (2012)

Goal/Initiative	Level of Impact
Goal One: Alberta has a stronger and more competitive economy	
➤ 1.1 Ensure that there is a coordinated and cohesive alignment between Alberta’s economic development activities at home and abroad.	Medium
➤ 1.3 Foster strong and collaborative regional economies by supporting economic growth in all regions of the province, aiding in the development of small businesses and by providing economic development tools, information and advice.	High
➤ 1.4 Work with relevant ministries on the development and implementation of the Alberta Competitiveness Council’s priority actions to remove barriers for key economic sectors.	High
Goal Two: Effective and efficient government	
➤ 2.1 Support and work with deputy ministers to develop and implement a plan to make the Alberta Public Service a leader in innovation, efficiency and delivery of services to Albertans.	Low
➤ 2.2 Champion government initiatives that will streamline, integrate and consolidate program delivery across ministries, reduce duplication and increase efficiency to provide better outcomes for Albertans.	Medium
➤ 2.3 Strengthen accountability by continuing to implement innovative practices to ensure Albertans receive informative, timely and readable business plans, annual reports and government estimates.	Low
➤ 2.4 Through the Public Agency Governance Framework, ensure all agencies are working towards the Government of Alberta’s desired outcomes.	High
Goal Three: Fiscal sustainability – disciplined government spending	
➤ 3.3 Through proactive collaboration with other ministries, project future spending requirements associated with existing programs, approved capital projects and new initiatives to identify fiscal choices.	Medium
Goal Four: Skilled and engaged Alberta Public Service employees	
➤ 4.1 Support an innovative and efficient Alberta Public Service through developing, enhancing and supporting the implementation of effective cross-government programs and services to attract, develop and engage employees.	Medium
➤ 4.2 Ensure the effectiveness of human resource policies through consultation, development and enhancement of policies, guidelines and directives.	Low

Education

- <http://www.finance.alberta.ca/publications/budget/budget2012/education.pdf>

An expansion of foundational learning will have a strong potential impact on the Goals and Initiatives of Alberta Education, particularly in relation to those pertaining to the success of First nations, Métis and Inuit students. A summary of our assessments is presented in the following table.

Summary of Alignment with Alberta Education Goals and Initiatives (2012)

Goal/Initiative	Level of Impact
Goal One: Success for every student	
➤ 1.1 Support the development of an early learning and child care framework in collaboration with other government ministries and stakeholders.	Medium
➤ 1.2 Redesign standards and guidelines for the development of future curriculum (programs of study, assessment, learning and teaching resources) and the associated processes.	Medium
➤ 1.3 Continue the implementation of an inclusive education system in collaboration with partners and stakeholders.	Low
Goal Two: High quality education through collaboration and innovation	
➤ 2.6 Develop a technology strategy to enable effective learning and teaching.	Medium
Goal Three: Success for First Nations, Métis and Inuit students	
➤ 3.1 Collaborate with First Nations and Métis organizations to implement the FNMI Education Partnership Council Action Plan.	High
➤ 3.2 Collaborate with First Nations and the federal government to implement the Memorandum of Understanding for First Nations' education in Alberta.	Medium
➤ 3.3 Attract and retain increased numbers of FNMI professionals in the education workforce.	Medium
➤ 3.4 Work with school authorities, parents and communities to improve educational outcomes for FNMI students.	High

Human Services

- <http://www.finance.alberta.ca/publications/budget/budget2012/human-services.pdf>

Finally, there is also a potentially “High” relevance to a number of Alberta Human Services Goals and Initiatives. A summary of our assessments is presented in the following table.

Summary of Alignment with Alberta Human Services Goals and Initiatives (2012)

Goal/Initiative	Level of Impact
Goal Two: Alberta has fair, safe, healthy and inclusive workplaces and a skilled labour force that contributes to economic prosperity	
• 2.1 Support Albertans who require training through accurate and efficient assessment and provision of career and employment services.	High
• 2.2 Implement targeted workforce strategies and initiatives to increase the participation of those under-represented in the labour force including Aboriginal people, youth, and immigrants, persons with disabilities, low-income earners and mature workers.	High
• 2.5 Advance occupational health, safety and employment standards awareness through partnerships, educational programs and compliance initiatives.	Low
Goal Three: In collaboration with communities and stakeholders, ensure that the conditions and opportunities are created for Albertans to succeed	
• 3.1 Involving other Ministers, lead the development of a social policy framework to guide the alignment and redesign of social policy and programs to achieve better outcomes for children and families.	Low
• 3.3 Engage in dialogue with First Nations leadership, Aboriginal communities, service provision partners, and federal and provincial government departments to develop a shared awareness and understanding of complex issues and collaboratively create new approaches to improve outcomes.	High
• 3.4 Support client-centred, integrated service delivery through the alignment of policies, practices and technology through Alberta Supports and in collaboration with partnering ministries.	Medium
• 3.5 In partnership with other ministries work with Alberta's industry associations and employers to assist them in meeting their workforce requirements.	High
• 3.6 Strengthen quality child care through accreditation and quality assurance mechanisms and support families requiring child care by streamlining the child care subsidy program.	Low

III. Economic Arguments

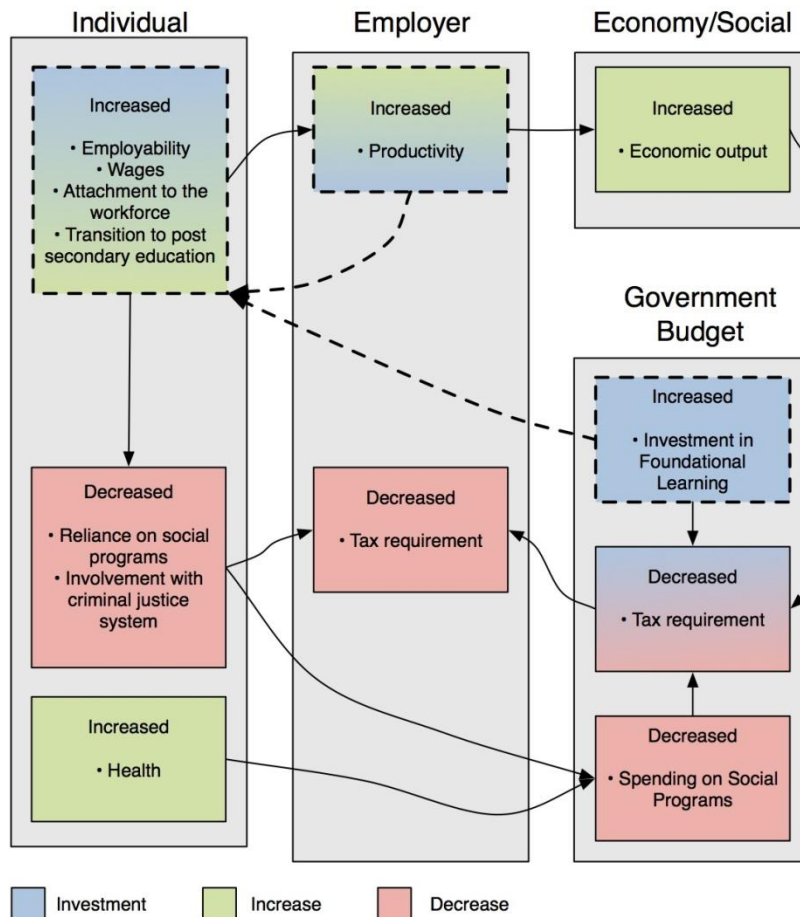
The economic business case for investing in improvements to foundational learning skills is centred on creating a greater ability in individuals to be more “job ready”. In the context of literacy, the Conference Board of Canada noted the following:

Enhancing literacy levels in the workplace improves bottom-line performance for Canada's employers and gives employer's a better chance for success in their careers.¹⁶

Improvements in foundational skills have well documented benefits for the labour market and economy. These benefits also accrue to the **individuals** whose skills are enhanced, their **employers** and also result in benefits from the broader **economic/social** perspective. Also important is the **government budget** perspective, as this is likely from where some or most of the funding for additional foundational learning programs will come.

These benefits and their interconnections are summarized in the following figure and discussed below.

Interconnectivity of Benefits of More Foundational Learning Initiatives



¹⁶ The Economic Benefits of Improving Literacy Skills in the Workplace, The Conference Board of Canada, Bloom Burrows Lafleur Squires, page 1.

A. Individuals

Improving all types of foundational skills can be expected to increase the employability and ultimately wages/salaries and attachment to the labour force. Obviously, workers will be more qualified candidates to fill job openings.

The raw correlations between numeracy and literacy and the probability of being employed are large and positive. Having Level 1 numeracy skills is associated with having a 4-6 percentage point higher probability of being employed. Having Level 1 or above literacy skills is associated with having a 5-9 percentage point higher probability of being in employment.¹⁷

In addition, it has been found that where workers find themselves unemployed, those with higher foundational skills re-enter the workforce more quickly than those who without.

For individuals who suffer a period of unemployment, the duration is usually shorter for those who are more accomplished in reading, writing and numeracy.¹⁸

Various studies have also found that as a result of better employment opportunities, individuals with higher foundational skills tend to earn more money. For example, it has been reported that workers with strong literacy skills earned more than two times those with poor literacy skills, and approximately 30 per cent more than those with weak literacy.¹⁹ As well, a study completed by Green and Riddell found that each year of education raised earnings by more than 8 per cent.²⁰ This impact was found to be greater than the impact of labour market experience on earnings, which was found to be approximately 4.5 per cent for each additional year of job experience in the early years of one's career, where the greatest gain in experience is typically obtained.

Further, as individuals become more proficient in foundational skills, they also have higher transition rates to post secondary programs. As is discussed below, this is important in creating a higher skilled workforce that will be necessary to allow for the evolution of the Alberta and Canadian economies to higher valued products, where it is expected we will have a competitive advantage.

Improved attachment to the labour force reduces the reliance of individuals on social programs (for example, social assistance) and involvement with the criminal justice system. Obviously where individuals are gainfully employed, their need for social assistance and employment insurance benefits is reduced by the occurrence of work.

For each of the three literacy types, individuals with high literacy skills had a lower incidence of unemployment than those with low literacy skills. Of those with local document literacy skills, 6.7 per cent were unemployed, while only 5.0 per cent of those with high document literacy were unemployed. The comparable figures for prose literacy are 6.9 per cent and 4.9 per cent; and 7.4 per cent and 3.7 per cent for quantitative literacy.²¹

Also on the positive side of the ledger, increased foundational skill levels and a greater attachment to the labour force tends to improve various social outcomes, including an individual's health.

¹⁷ S. McIntosh and A. Vignoles, 2001b, 'Micro-analysis of the effects of literacy and numeracy' in *Improving Adult Basic Skills*, DfEE, Research Report 251

¹⁸ TD Bank Financial Group, *Literacy Matters: A call to action*, September 2007, pg12. <http://www.td.com/document/PDF/economics/special/td-economics-special-literacy0907.pdf>

¹⁹ *Ibid*, pg 12.

²⁰ David A. Green and Craig W. Riddell. "Literacy, Numeracy and Labour Market Outcomes in Canada" Statistics Canada, 2001 page 19.

²¹ The Economic Benefits of Improving Literacy Skills in the Workplace, The Conference Board of Canada, Bloom Burrows Lafleur Squires, page 12.

*The evidence suggests that regardless of country context, staying in school makes people healthier. Moreover, educational attainment is widely acknowledged as an important determinant of socio-economic status and income, which are both key determinants of health.*²²

What is less obvious is how employment can affect the individual's behavior and association with positive or negative social groups and activities. It is very important for youth to gain an attachment to work as unemployment can create increased risks of being engaged in negative social activities.

*Unemployment can lead to difficulties integrating into society and the economy, particularly for those who lack other possible avenues for success, which can lead some youth to explore crime and delinquency as a way to acquire status. For most youth, this period is relatively short and they soon enter into steady jobs, positive/supportive relationships and family responsibilities.*²³

Obviously, where individuals are gainfully employed, their need for social assistance and employment insurance benefits is reduced by the occurrence of work.

*For each of the three literacy types, individuals with high literacy skills had a lower incidence of unemployment than those with low literacy skills. Of those with local document literacy skills, 6.7 per cent were unemployed, while only 5.0 per cent of those with high document literacy were unemployed. The comparable figures for prose literacy are 6.9 per cent and 4.9 per cent; and 7.4 per cent and 3.7 per cent for quantitative literacy.*²⁴

There are many studies that have documented the relationship between high school completion and greater attachment to the labour force has toward citizenship skills and civic engagement:

- Each year of additional schooling increases voter participation by approximately 7 per cent.²⁵
- Dropping out of high school is associated with decreased participation in the electoral system and political process, decreased charitable giving and reduced social cohesion.²⁶
- In rural areas, having a university degree increases volunteerism by over 2 times.²⁷

The 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS), the Canadian component of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL), included questions about volunteerism and participation in community or organizations or activities. The results showed that half of all individuals with poor prose literacy were not engaged in their community compared with one fifth of individuals with strong prose literacy.²⁸

An increase in volunteerism via roles such as tutoring or mentoring may actually be a key component of any overall foundational learning strategy.

²² Hankivsky, Olena, "Cost Estimates of Dropping Out of High School in Canada", Canadian Council on Learning, December 2008, page 21.

²³ Valerie Pottie Bunge, Holly Johnson and Thierno A. Baldé, Exploring Crime Patterns in Canada, Statistics Canada, June 2005, page 20.

²⁴ The Economic Benefits of Improving Literacy Skills in the Workplace, The Conference Board of Canada, Bloom Burrows Lafleur Squires, page 12.

²⁵ Dee, T.S., *Are There Civic Returns to Education?*, Journal of Public Economics, NBER Working Paper Series, Working Paper 9588, page 23.

²⁶ Lafleur, B, *Dropping Out: The Cost to Canada*, The Conference Board of Canada Report 83-92-E, March 1992.

²⁷ Statistics Canada, Impact of education on civic engagement in rural and urban Canada. *The Daily*, July 2006, www.nupr.neu.edu/2-03/left_behind.pdf

²⁸ TD Bank Financial Group, Literacy Matters: A call to action, September 2007, page 14.

<http://www.td.com/document/PDF/economics/special/td-economics-special-literacy0907.pdf>

B. Employers

For employers, the benefits of a more capable workforce are obvious. In times when the labour market has a sufficient number of workers to meet employers' demands for labour, employers have a greater variety of potential candidates from which to choose, and a better match to specific needs. However, the benefits to employers are even greater in periods when labour markets are tight and there are a limited number of qualified workers to fill job vacancies. In these periods, employers often accept inferior candidates (because of the limited supply of qualified workers). It is in this labour market environment where enhancing workers' basic skills of literacy, numeracy and problem solving have the greatest benefit to employers.

It has been found that there is a direct link to improvements in literacy and improved labour productivity. This improvement can be significant as evidenced from a study of the relationship between literacy scores and labour productivity across fourteen OECD countries.

A country that achieves literacy scores one percent higher than the average ends up in a steady state with labour productivity and GDP per capita respectively higher than other countries by 2.5 and 1.5 percent on average. This result holds whether literacy is measured by prose, quantitative or documents skills.²⁹

Practical examples of how higher foundational skills help improve productivity were provided by the Conference Board of Canada, when reporting on the results of a survey of employers regarding the benefits they found associated with enhanced literacy skills.³⁰ They included:

- Increased ability to handle training on the job;
- Better team performance;
- Improved labour-management relations;
- Increased quality;
- Improved results in job-specific training/quicker training results;
- Reduced time per task;
- Increased output of products and services; and
- Reduced error rate.

C. Economy/Social

From a broader point of view, when individual employer productivity gains are summed across industries and across the economy, there can be a significant increase in total economic output in the economy at the provincial and national levels. With increased globalization of the world's economies and improved access to markets, competitiveness and productivity of the workforce has become increasingly important for employers. This has highlighted the need to have a highly skilled and competitive workforce.

As globalization has made Canada and other industrialized countries less competitive in labour intensive industries that depend on cheap and relatively low skilled workers it has been necessary for our nation to adapt to compete. This has pushed our economy to higher end products that require both more sophisticated technologies and higher skilled workers. As this trend continues, the importance of improving the skill base of the work force because more acute.

²⁹ Serge Coulombe, Jean-Francois Tremblay, and Sylvie Marchand, 2004. "International Adult Literacy Survey: Literacy scores, human capital, and growth across fourteen OECD countries" Statistics Canada. Page 31.

³⁰ The Economic Benefits of Improving Literacy Skills in the Workplace, The Conference Board of Canada, Bloom Burrows Laffleur Squires, Table 1.

D. Government Budgets

The government budget contribution would likely be the most significant investment in adult foundational learning programming, although it is expected this could be supplemented with both employer and individual contributions. Offsetting the increase in costs associated with delivering programs to improve foundational skills would be an increase in tax revenues resulting from improved worker income, productivity and economic output.

There would also be an expected reduction in the requirement for spending on various types of social programs, including:

- **Social Assistance:** Gaining employment will reduce or eliminate the need for social assistance payments for those individuals who successfully transition from support to independence.
- **Employment Insurance:** As above, greater attachment to the workforce as a result of skill enhancements will reduce the need for employment insurance benefits.
- **Healthcare:** Studies have found that high school dropouts cost the healthcare system more due to higher rates of cardiovascular illnesses, diabetes and other ailments.³¹
- **Law enforcement and criminal justice system:** Various studies have found that each extra year of schooling gained can have a significant reduction in the both violent and property crimes.³²

When the reduction in costs to government associated with higher levels of education attainment, higher high school completion rates, and improved foundational skills are added up, the benefits are substantial.

An estimate of overall cost savings in 2008 resulting from a one-percentage-point increase in the Canadian graduation rate can be obtained by adding only the cost savings for the categories for which 'per dropout' costs are annual (e.g. social assistance, crime, annual earning loss, annual tax revenue loss, annual revenue loss in employment insurance, employment insurance cost and intangible costs). The aggregate estimated cost savings to Canada would be over \$7.7 billion for 2008.³³

Using the results from the Hankivsky study (quoted above) and including only the government budget components, the average cost per drop out in Canada would be over \$15,000.³⁴

As an additional example, a study of the impact of the high school completion in California on the state and local governments found there to be substantial budget savings associated with reducing the dropout rate.

A fall in the dropout rate by 30% for one cohort of students in California would yield total fiscal savings to the state/local government of \$1.90 billion; if the dropout rate was halved, the fiscal savings would be \$3.17 billion. Total fiscal savings to the federal government in California would be \$4.10 billion or \$6.83 billion, respectively.³⁵

³¹ Hankivsky, Olena, "Cost Estimates of Dropping Out of High School in Canada", Canadian Council on Learning, December 2008, page 16.

³² Ibid, page 16.

³³ Ibid, page 8.

³⁴ Health is the largest component of these savings at almost \$8,100 per drop out.

³⁵ Belfield, C.R., Levin, H.M., *The Economic Loss of High School Dropouts in California*, California Dropout Research Project Report #1, August 2007, page 35.

These savings are substantial as the 30 per cent reduction in the high school dropout rate resulted in an annual fiscal savings equal to 1.3 per cent of the state budget. The net benefits of improving high school completion rates were found to be in the 2 to 4 times range; or for every dollar invested in reducing dropout rates there is a resulting \$2 to \$4 increase in benefits.³⁶

When just looking at the impact of education on involvement in the criminal justice system, an investment in education that improves the high school completion rate can generate significant savings in reduced crime rates and the cost of crime. A recent study on the impact of high school dropout rates on the cost of crime in California found that it totaled over \$1 billion.³⁷

From the published research reviewed for this study, it is obvious that there are substantial potential returns to investing in improving foundational skills.

E. Economic Opportunity Cost of Skill Shortages

The benefits of enhanced foundational skill attainment are most pronounced when the economy is operating at, or near full employment. In extremely tight labour market conditions, such as those experienced across Alberta in the years prior to November 2008, many employers were faced with hiring workers that had below expected or needed skill levels. This resulted in higher costs to the employer associated with training, and also lower worker productivity. In addition, in some cases employers were not able to take advantage of market opportunities that would have allowed their business to grow. Or in other cases, employers were forced to reduce shifts and have lower output because workers were not available to even maintain current output.

In remote areas with relatively small numbers of locally available workers, this problem is accentuated. This is especially true for local business opportunities that cannot be realized because the local labour pool does not have the skills required. As noted in a recent study by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce discussing the prospects for creating sustainable business development in remote communities:

*One of the biggest contributions to sustainable economic development by companies locating in remote communities is the smaller businesses which are created or grow up around them. A large resource extraction or infrastructure project can foster the creation of small, local businesses and a local skilled workforce, which have the potential to contribute to the economic development and social fabric of communities after a large employer has left.*³⁸

In order for the business growth model to be successful, the local labour force must have a sufficient skill level to obtain employment in resource based industry opportunities when they arise. Without this basic skill set, the resource based employers will not find the skilled workforce they need locally. If skilled workers are not available locally, employers will bring them to the community in the form of mobile workers, who after the project is completed, will take their skills and experience to the next project located somewhere else. This represents a lost opportunity for the local economy to gain valuable experience that, after the resource project is completed, can be utilized by local employers in pursuing various business opportunities.

³⁶ Belfield, C.R., Levin, H.M., *The Return on Investment for Improving California's High School Graduation Rate - Policy Brief*, California Dropout Research Project Policy Brief #2, August 2007, page 1.

³⁷ Belfield, C.R., Levin, H.M., *High School Dropouts and The Economic Losses from Juvenile Crime in California*, California Dropout Research Project Report #16, September 2009, page 38.

³⁸ The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, "The Business Case for Investing in Canada's Remote Communities", September 2011,

http://www.chamber.ca/images/uploads/Reports/2011/The_Business_Case_for_Investing_in_Canadas_Remote_Communities0911.pdf

Finally, in some cases, where the shortage of skilled workers is acute, it is possible that major economic development opportunities could be delayed or even cancelled. As noted in the Report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, growth of several key resources sectors could be inhibited due to shortages of skilled workers. This includes industries that are important for the growth of the economy in the NADC area, including: mining, oil and gas, forestry and construction. As noted particularly for the mining industry:

Employers in the mining industry are facing major skills and labour shortages. If this problem is not resolved, it could jeopardize the expansion of the industry over the next two decades.³⁹

Alberta is Canada's predominant oil and gas producer. Following a revision of royalty rates in 2010 and in consideration of new production methods such as horizontal drilling and fracturing, the Petroleum Human Resources Council of Canada has concluded that:

Alberta's current labour supply will not support the province's projected economic growth. Industry and the province will need to work on two fronts to find: increase the current labour supply with training and education, and attract workers with the necessary skills and experience from other provinces and countries.⁴⁰

Furthermore, with respect to oilsands development and the potential of operational jobs associated with the industry, the Petroleum Human Resources Council of Canada has noted in *Oil Sands Labour Market Outlook to 2021*:

In 2011, oil sands operations employed just over 20,000 workers; by 2021, employment is projected to increase by 73%. A number of oil sands operations and occupations are forecasted to add over 100% of their current workforce by 2021. Moreover, age-related attrition is projected to increase the sector's hiring requirements by almost 30%.⁴¹

F. A Hypothetical Investment and Cost-Benefit Analysis

From the analysis presented above, it can be expected that enhanced investments in programs that support foundational learning would be of benefit to all the stakeholders involved. While it is difficult to provide an accurate estimate of the potential return on investment in a comprehensive way, below, we present a hypothetical, but in our view realistic scenario. Obviously, it would be possible to complete such an analysis under a wide range of possible combinations. In order to account for a range of complex factors such as atrophy of benefits over time and uncertainty over outcomes, productivity, employment and earnings of individuals, and to not "over sell", our assumptions are very conservative.

We note that the four colleges in the Clearinghouse consortium have surplus capacity going forward through to 2019-20 equivalent to approximately 1,500 FTE students (a significant portion of the entire

³⁹ Report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, "Skills Development in Remote Rural Communities in n Era of Fiscal Restraint", June 2012, page 3.

⁴⁰ Petroleum Human Resources Development Council of Canada
<http://www.petrohrsc.ca/labour-market-information/medium-to-long-term-outlooks/labour-trends-by-province.aspx##alberta> Accessed October 29, 2012.

⁴¹ Petroleum Human Resources Development Council of Canada
<http://www.petrohrsc.ca/labour-market-information/medium-to-long-term-outlooks/labour-trends-by-industry-sector.aspx> Accessed October 29, 2012.

system’s surplus capacity of approximately 7,000 FTE students). The breakdown of the surplus capacity for each college with a comparison to the entire Alberta postsecondary system is summarized in the following table.

Overview of Postsecondary System Capacity to 2019-20

	2011-12 Existing Capacity	Approved Expansion/Under Construction	2019-20 Projected capacity	Projected 2008-09 to	Range 2019-20	Surplus/ Shortage to Meet High
				Low	High	
Grande Prairie	2,600	170	2,770	1,290	2,073	697
Keyano	1,668	30	1,698	1,212	1,325	373
Northern Lakes	1,250		1,250	1,020	1,172	78
Portage	1,260	100	1,360	934	1024	336
Subtotal	6,778	300	7,078	4,456	5,594	1,484
System Total	160,113	8,075	168,888	146,054	161,152	7,036

Source: Derived from Chapter 5 of Campus Alberta Planning Resource
(<http://eae.alberta.ca/post-secondary/policy/capr.aspx>)

To conduct our analysis, we assumed that approximately 50% of the current excess capacity at the four colleges could be used to provide services to 700 FTE clients per year over a five year period. This would allow for 3,500 FTE clients to be served over this period, which represents 16 per cent of the total number of individuals that have been determined to be in need of services, based on the “high school gap” (approximately 22,000).

Our additional assumptions include the following:

- The benefit cost analysis has been conducted assuming that the “program” would be in effect for five years and that the benefits in terms of cost savings and productivity gains would last for a period of 10 years from the beginning of the period. As a result, the expenditures on this program would continue for five years and the benefits would be for a period of 10 years.
- All future costs and benefits have been discounted at a rate of 5% per year.
- The incremental cost to the Government of Alberta would be a net \$8.1 million per year or \$28.35 million over five years. These figures are based on an allowance for investment of \$9,000 per individual to cover costs. We assumed this to be a reasonable “average” but note that some students/programs could be more expensive and others less so.
- Employers, or other third parties, are assumed to cost share the program and contribute 10% of the total cost. Employer expenditures on the program are assumed to be \$630,000 per year or \$3.15 million over five years.
- The breakdown of the “status” of the 700 individuals per year would be: 300 “income support”, 200 “employment insurance” and 200 “low income”.
- Employment and high school completion success is assumed to be 25% for all program participants. This figure is low and one would expect better outcomes but has been set deliberately for illustrative purposes and to account for other more complex factors not addressed in the model. While there are benefits of higher skills to all individuals, it also helps to address that in the use of data covering all individuals aged 15 or greater that some may not seek employment because of being too young or too old.
- We have also made very conservative assumptions as to the annual salaries or wages of the “successful participants” as follows: “income support” - \$25,000; “employment insurance” - \$30,000; and “low income” - \$35,000. Realistically, one might expect earnings for at least some to be higher, particularly if they continued on to further postsecondary education or even trades or professions in some instances.

- Savings to government included in the analysis are reductions in income support and employment insurance for those program participants assumed to be working after completing the program. For those employed after the program, public expenditures are assumed to decline by 90% for those on income support, 30% for those on employment insurance, and 5% for low income workers. These assumptions reflect that the income status of participants before entering the program will have a different impact in terms of savings to government as a result of the program.
- The improvement in worker skills can be expected to have an incremental impact on the productivity in the work place. This would result from the worker requiring less time to complete tasks or requiring less instruction, guidance or training. These potential savings have been included in the analysis as a percentage of a worker's salary – assumed to be 5% of the salary received by program participants who have successfully completed the program and have subsequently secured work.
- It has also been assumed that the employment and productivity benefits would atrophy over time, reflecting that the program impact would be most felt immediately following the program.

Results

Impact on Government

It is estimated that a modest government investment of approximately \$8 million per year over five years would provide a return on the investment in the program of 7 % per year over a 10 year period.⁴² Looking at the results of the investment in foundational learning from another perspective, the net benefit would total approximately \$3 million (at a social discount rate⁴³ of 5%) over the 10 year period of analysis. This analysis includes the potential savings that result from greater attachment to the workforce for only 25 per cent of the participants in the program. These benefits can be considered conservative and would be substantially higher if the employment success rate were better.

It is also important to note that this analysis does not include the potential indirect benefits associated with other possible reductions in program costs in areas such as healthcare, law enforcement and the criminal justice system involvement of program which have been noted above as a result of obtaining a high school diploma. Using the findings of Hankivsky, the potential savings for reduced health care costs alone for 175 individuals (25 per cent of the 700) could total over \$1.4 million for each year the program were in place.⁴⁴

Impact on Participating Employers

In this example, it is also assumed that the cost of the additional investment in foundational learning would be shared with employers. Employers were assumed to cover 10% of the total program costs (\$630,000 per year over five years). From the employer perspective, the results are beneficial based on the assumed productivity improvements which are equal to 5% of a worker's salary. This is a one-time productivity benefit that the employer is assumed to receive over the 10 year analysis timeframe. Based on this example, over the 10-year time-frame, employers would see a return on investment equal to 22 %. On this basis, the "case" for participation would seem strong.

⁴² It can be expected that these benefits would continue beyond the 10 year timeframe. In addition, it could be expected that in some cases the elimination of the foundational learning gap could lead to additional higher education and training. None of these potential benefits is included in this analysis.

⁴³ The social discount rate is the amount that future net benefits are discounted annually. The social discount rate is distinguished from the private (or corporate) discount rate in analyses of this type because the investment is made by the public sector. Typically, the social discount rate is lower than the private discount rate because public investments are generally considered to be patient than private investments. For additional explanation, see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_discount_rate

⁴⁴ Using the findings of Hankivsky (page 25), there is an estimated incremental health care cost of over \$8,000 per dropout as compared to a high school graduate. In the example benefit cost analysis the number of program participants successful in getting a job was estimated to be 175 per year.

Additional details in support of this discussion and analysis are presented in the following table.

Summary of Foundational Learning Investment Cost-Benefit Analysis Details

Program Intervention/Participation (Clients)			Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	
Income Support			300	300	300	300	300	
Employment Insurance Low Income Workers			200	200	200	200	200	
Total			700	700	700	700	700	
Program Cost (Avg Cost Per Client)		Per Client	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	
Administration		\$ 500.00	350,000	350,000	350,000	350,000	350,000	
Case Services		\$ 8,000.00	5,600,000	5,600,000	5,600,000	5,600,000	5,600,000	
Follow Up		\$ 500.00	350,000	350,000	350,000	350,000	350,000	
Total		\$ 9,000.00	6,300,000	6,300,000	6,300,000	6,300,000	6,300,000	
Program Funding		Share	Per Client	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Provincial Govt	90%	\$ 8,100.00	5,670,000	5,670,000	5,670,000	5,670,000	5,670,000	
Other Govt	0%	\$ -	-	-	-	-	-	
Employer	10%	\$ 900.00	630,000	630,000	630,000	630,000	630,000	
Total	100%	\$ 9,000.00	6,300,000	6,300,000	6,300,000	6,300,000	6,300,000	
Incremental Employment Success		Person Yr/Client	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	
Income Support	25%	75.0	75.0	75.0	75.0	75.0	75.0	
Employment Insurance	25%	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	
Low Income Workers	25%	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	50.0	
Incremental Reductions in Direct Public Assistance ¹			Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	
Income Support	90%	\$ 22,500	1,687,500	1,687,500	1,687,500	1,687,500	1,687,500	
Employment Insurance	30%	\$ 9,000	450,000	450,000	450,000	450,000	450,000	
Low Income Workers	5%	\$ 1,750	87,500	87,500	87,500	87,500	87,500	
Total	% Income	Financial Assist	2,225,000	2,225,000	2,225,000	2,225,000	2,225,000	
Incremental Increase in Worker Productivity ¹			Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	
Income Support	5.0%	\$ 1,250	93,750	93,750	93,750	93,750	93,750	
Employment Insurance	5.0%	\$ 1,500	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	
Low Income Workers	5.0%	\$ 1,750	87,500	87,500	87,500	87,500	87,500	
Total	% Income	Productivity	256,250	256,250	256,250	256,250	256,250	
Provincial Government Results		NVP	3,022,902					
		IRR	7%					
Employer Results		NVP	1,097,500					
		IRR	22%					

1. New amounts that would be generated each year.

Chapter 6 – Summary and Analysis of Stakeholder Consultations

As part of the research for this assignment, we conducted telephone interviews with a range of stakeholders representatives from small business, economic development organizations, front-line managers involved with the delivery of programs, educators from School Districts and postsecondary colleges, and trade unions.

In order to help to validate and possibly focus our model review, our objectives were to:

- Gain a better understanding of the dynamics of foundational learning including participation in initiatives, partners and roles, other main contacts or linkages, and other matters associated with the delivery, planning and monitoring of outcomes;
- Explore problems currently encountered;
- Explore suggestions for improvement;
- When relevant, attempt to quantify future staffing or skills needs;
- Obtain feedback on two possible “solutions”; and
- Obtain feedback on other possible models to explore or individuals to contact.

Our goal was to complete 20 interviews. Over a four week period, an intensive effort (including assistance from Steering Committee members to gain cooperation) was made and 26 “quality” individuals were contacted. However, we were successful in only completing 13 interviews.

The results of our interviews which, in many instances, need to be viewed from the individual perspectives of experts in discreet and varying areas, rather than more general trends, are summarized and discussed below.

Interview Findings and Analysis

1. Synthesis of Findings from Review of Programming Activity

From our review of linkages, and more detailed exploration of select initiatives, we have distilled the following observations:

1. Costs of delivering programming in Northern Alberta are higher than in other parts of the province, yet this is not reflected in the level of funding provided.
2. The number of participants in each “class” or “intake” was generally small (less than 15).
3. Poor behavioral patterns often entrenched by grade 6-7, especially with Aboriginal students. There is a need for some sort of outreach/intervention/role modelling/mentorship to address and reverse this problem. Life skills programming is required for older Aboriginals in order to “catch up”.
4. Aboriginal people are reluctant to leave home. The problem may be partly “social or cultural” but economics may play a major role, as on reserve Aboriginal students do not necessarily receive a living allowance (funds dispersed at discretion of Bands) which is a problem for some.
5. Generally speaking, goals, objectives and targets for programs are not well documented and follow up mechanisms and procedures could be enhanced. There is a need for longer-term follow-up on a “holistic” basis. This will be very important not only as Government of Alberta moves more toward results based budgeting but to also “sell” industry and other stakeholders on the need and benefits of investments.
6. Cold Lake region service providers seemed to have the best support from industry and community. The policies of Imperial Oil that encourage mentorship and community involvement may be factors.
7. Video conferencing may be key to finding cost effective solutions but it is essential that there be “real contact” from time to time. Bandwidth is already becoming a problem.
8. Northern Lights School Division, for example, has dual credit relationships with Portage College.
9. For some students with lower skills, inclusion of programming/training features like obtaining a driver’s license and financial/credit card literacy may be helpful.

10. There may be benefits to attempt to better integrate physical fitness and health in some programming.
11. There may be a need for more programming effort for immigrants and temporary foreign workers.
12. Finally, there is a wide range of foundational learning needs and circumstances within the NADC region (based on among other things, age, backgrounds, level of training and skills required, and types of training associated with industry bases) and the issue has complex linkages to range of government programs. It would be inappropriate to consider it to be a “strictly rural, remote or Aboriginal” problem for which “one size fits all” or “cookie cutter” solutions may not be appropriate.

2. Priorities for Change or Improvement

Priorities for change in descending order of frequency of mention include:

- The need for improved access to social and support services (mental health, guidance counsellors, Aboriginal elders, dealing with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, mentors, coping or life skills programming, and school nurse etc). (5)
- Changes to content with suggestions for more “softer skills” (increasing GED requirements and adopting some European system practices) and more math, science and physics. (4)
- More stable funding to facilitate better long range planning, integration of “soft skills” (for which many employers will not provide funding or endorse training at lower levels) and mitigation of risks associated with program development.(3)
- Improved transportation for learners. (3)
- Extended funding for some upgrading students who only can access funding for 3 years, which means that students below skill level 4 may exhaust funding before they get to “college prep” and may never advance. (2)
- More reliable outcomes reporting and information sharing. (2)

Other “one off” comments included the following:

- Individuals in smaller communities need better access to industry specific experience.
- Expand trades offerings in Fort Chipewyan.
- Provide more Integrated Training in the Northwest region.
- Make it easier to access NAIT and SAIT programs.
- Make it easier for individuals not on social programs to take time off for studies or be compensated.
- Help to overcome the “stigma” associated with the need to upgrade.
- Need for a study to identify the resources available in the community and through stakeholders.
- More mentorship training for Foremen and experienced workers to enable them to pass on skills.
- Find a way to establish better mentorship opportunities with workers (such as geologists) who go in and out of Fort Chipewyan somewhat regularly.
- Provide funding for a “Health” program in Fort Chipewyan to provide linkages with a recently constructed seniors lodge.
- Need for longer duration programs.
- Need for more administration (marketing and contract management) funding.
- Need for more bandwidth if on-line and virtual solutions are to be successful.
- Greater emphasis on creating new and innovative partnerships.
- Extra emphasis on individuals aged 7 to 17 (to deal with issues before they become insurmountable).
- Need to find ways to increase class sizes to achieve economies of scale for some.

- Need to find ways to be able to have better access to Federal and Provincial officials and program information.
- Need to resolve funding eligibility differences between foreign workers and permanent residents.

3. Suggestions Regarding the Four Colleges

The following specific comments were provided.

Information Needs of Stakeholders

- Needs to be better outcomes reporting.

Suggestions for New Programs or Services

- Local 955 would like to have closer links with Keyano College as this would make it much easier for members to receive training (reduced travel time and expense) but past experience has been that Keyano is very expensive for services provided. There may be a demand for 1000 pipeline crane operators by 2015.
- There is a need for more “Integrated Training” within Northwest Alberta.
- More shorter-term task specific training, such as housekeeping or bartending.

Suggestions for Improving Linkages or Service Delivery

- At the practitioner level, there is a need to be able to access and share information about best practices, trends, professional development opportunities etc. This might be accomplished simply through a “SharePoint” site among Clearinghouse members but more elaborate and extensive linkages to other networks may be beneficial as a system evolves.
- At the administration and research levels, there could be benefit from a more coordinated approach (even with other service providers and fields) to deal with issues such as research, provision of counselling and First Nations.
- Campuses operate too much in isolation; there would be benefits to moving more toward a Campus Alberta approach for foundational learning delivery.
- Campuses may need to consider specialization of programming (in order to reduce delivery costs).
- Colleges need to take steps to help individuals at the secondary and even primary levels to plan better for transition to postsecondary.
- Need for closer links between Northern Lakes and Grande Prairie Fairview Campus.
- Portage College has a particularly welcoming environment for Aboriginal students and other colleges should attempt to emulate some of the features.
- There is a need for improved effort to market programs and colleges to stakeholders.

4. Ratings with Respect to Essential Skills

Of the nine Essential Skills, “Thinking”, “Computer Use” and “Continuous Learning” skills are lacking for most experienced hospitality industry and union members. New equipment goes to older union members, which also compounds problems for new members to stay current.

5. Future Staffing Needs over the Next Two Years

The following responses were received from private sector or “outside” (non-educational institute or government) participants:

Individual	Comments
Felix Seiter (Lodging and Hospitality Industry Grande Prairie)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organization is expected to require the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Housekeeping - 200 to 300; ○ Servers – 100; ○ Front Desk – 40; ○ Chefs – 40; and ○ Maintenance – 40. • As the economy improves, need increases due to demand and staff turnover.
Darlene Pysyk (Local 955 – Power Engineers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Up to 1,000 pipeline workers.

6. Perspectives on Social Impact Bonds and Education Maintenance Allowances

As expected, there was a range in the ability of individuals to speak to these matters; however, some were knowledgeable and provide the following comments.

a. Social Impact Bonds

Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great way to get businesses to fund basic skills programs. • They currently find it difficult to gain access to industry grants/funding because they are a Registered Society but not a Registered Charity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive as a step in the right direction but need for caution to ensure that there is not too much emphasis on industry’s “advantage”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A suitable project involving trucking industry due to high cost of simulators.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foresee a lot of dangers with this idea. Industry or corporate motivated results which do not really have a place in economic development.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally think this could work with certain oil companies as they have incentive to train local workers in the community. It also provides benefit to community residents to add capacity to the community.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive way to do things. Good way to incorporate local industry and chamber of commerce.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not in favour as this allows government to “abdicate” responsibilities to organizations who may not have an interest in maintaining standards etc.

b. Education Maintenance Allowances

Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some positive feedback, especially for trades related programs and newer industries which are surfacing in this area.

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Idea is good but needs to include training that is not an expectation of the organization. For example essential skills training. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are already other programs that exist like this. Don't need to have yet another one. Focus instead on why students that have supposedly graduated need still more training. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is worth pursuing. It could possibly work for Aboriginal students, newcomers who want to gain more education and skills but may come from lower income households and have limited resources. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Many work experience examples where students should be compensated for time.• Small allowances for things like parking can make a difference in students' ability to pursue education. |

7. Perspectives on Other Possible Models, Systems or Programs

Participants were asked to provide suggestions as to other systems, models or programs that might be worthy of consideration to address the foundational skills problems in Northern Alberta. On this matter, there are some trends in relation to perceived concerns and solutions.

While no specific model suggestions were made, there were suggestions from three individuals that there is a need to consider integrating some aspects of "European systems" to the foundational learning delivery. A common perception of these individuals was that the current systems were skewed too far toward providing "training" as soon as possible, rather than an "education" and that, as a result, many individuals still lacked the "softer skills" required for future success and adaptability.

Chapter 7 - Model Review

In the previous Chapters of this report, we explored a number of issues that help to frame the environment and need for foundational learning in Northern Alberta. To summarize, they included:

- An environmental scan covering socioeconomic factors, policies and positions of the Governments of Alberta and Canada, existing programming at the four Clearinghouse colleges, and barriers faced by foundational learners;
- A summary and analysis of the performance of primary and secondary students within the NADC region;
- An analysis of occupations that may have the best prospects for employment (and arguably a starting point for individuals to begin to apply their skills in the work force) and the skills required;
- A positive business case for the need for additional foundational learning programming; and
- The feedback from discussions with a number of stakeholders that has been helpful in expanding our understanding of the issues and needs.

With the knowledge gained from the previous Chapters, we now turn to an exploration of “models” that may help Clearinghouse college planners to address the problem.

The task has been complicated by a number of issues including, but not limited to:

- The complexity of the factors, in general, which affect the need for foundational learning and the broad range of public and private sector stakeholders.
- The range of needs, and to some extent differences between the Northeast and Northwest sub-regions, and the very complexity of foundational learning itself which might be categorized at three levels (the lowest being “essential skills”, or up to approximately a grade 4 level, the next being “adult basic education”, or the middle ground approximately between grade 4 and grade 9/10, and the highest being “academic upgrading”, so that individuals are at the ready to pursue some form of postsecondary training.
- The scope of foundational learning, encompassing educational, vocational and life skills components, and with a variety of other names such as “Essential Skills” and “Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN)”, “Adult Basic Education” or “Vocational Education Training (VET)”, is reflective of a range of approaches, priorities and placements within the hierarchy and structure of differing jurisdictions. These differences sometimes make comparisons or analyses more difficult.
- The subject matter, being broad and multi-faceted, and fairly fluid, makes staying abreast of recent developments, or to view matters or data within comparable time frames, complicated.
- Finally, there is no “accepted definition” of a “model” in the context of this subject matter. Our research has led us to broad and systemic organizations at one end of a continuum to fairly specific projects or pilots that show promise at the other.

As such, our review, in some respects, might be best considered as from specific and select “lenses”, levels or perspectives. We are hopeful that these differing perspectives will help to bring greater understanding and, from it, Clearinghouse planners and other stakeholders may begin to move forward. The way forward might be via considering how best practices or different approaches could be used or adapted, or in a better understanding of advocacy efforts that might be desirable to effect change, or additional specific subject matter research that might be required.

In order to help to provide some focus to this Chapter, it has been divided into the following Sections:

- Models for Curriculum Development and Delivery;
- Models for Building Capacity and Creating Pathways;
- Models to Address Financial Issues;

- Emerging Models or Research; and
- Exploration of Activities in Other Countries.

I. Models for Curriculum Development and Delivery

This Section presents several models, initiatives or programs that have relevance and/or represent current thinking in terms of the design and delivery of Foundational Learning within Northern Alberta. While there is no particular “clear cut” distinction between “development” and “delivery”, we have attempted to organize the Section accordingly, based on our judgment.

1. An Aboriginal Essential Skills Journey: Planting the Seeds for Growth⁴⁵

This document/system has been developed by Douglas College in Vancouver, BC in 2010 under a team led by Pam Tetarenko. It has been designed to help to develop essential skills curriculums and assessment methodologies in a manner that is sensitive to Aboriginal culture, perspectives and ensuing learning pathways, including circles or wheels that integrate emotional, physical, mental and spiritual aspects.

Commentary

While other similar documents, articles or systems may be found for Aboriginals and other groups, some key takeaways are discussed briefly below:

- For Foundational learning or essential skills curriculums to be effective and useful, they need to incorporate (in various forms) academic, work place and life-style components along with addressing the nine essential skills, as defined by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada including Reading, Document use, Numeracy, Writing, Oral communication, Working with others, Thinking, Computer use, and Continuous learning.
- Proper assessment, within the context of the learner’s background (experiences, beliefs, fears and strengths etc.), is important to design programs for individuals.
- Content and teaching practises should be focused on building skills or credentials that are, transferrable, task-based and objective oriented (employment or skills) and contextualized according to the backgrounds and needs of participants.

2. Piping Industry Apprenticeship Board Literacy & Essential Skills

Note: The following summary is derived from *Essential Skills for Piping Project: Summary of Research*.⁴⁶

This approximately \$545,000 study ran from December 2009 to May 2012 and was completed with the assistance of the University of Fraser Valley. At the time of the commencement of the study, the percentage of Red Seal completions in plumbing and piping was poor - around 55% - and not improving, indicating either that not enough essential skills training was being done in the piping industry apprenticeship training, or that the training was not meeting all the needs of the apprentices.

Moreover, employers, suppliers, and supervisors in the piping sector (and other trades) have expressed common concerns about the literacy and essential skills of their employees. They report

⁴⁵ An Aboriginal Essential Skills Journey: Planting the Seeds for Growth.
http://www.douglas.bc.ca/_shared/assets/Essentails_Skills_-_Facilitator_s_Guide66705.pdf. Accessed on August 26, 2012.

⁴⁶ Essential Skills for Piping Project: Summary of Research
[http://esp.uapicbc.ca/sites/default/files/pdf/Research%20Report%20Patridge%20\(3\)_0.pdf](http://esp.uapicbc.ca/sites/default/files/pdf/Research%20Report%20Patridge%20(3)_0.pdf)

that many apprentices, while able to pass the exams to qualify for Red Seal, were still unprepared for the workplace. The major gaps appear to be in critical thinking and problem solving, interpersonal skills, and life skills – all skills required to maintain employment, be effective on the job, and keep up-to-date with technology.

The key findings and recommendations of the study are summarized below.

Gaps in Current Essential Skills Delivery in Canada

Within the Canadian Essential Skills programs related to trades training, the following gaps exist(ed):

- The focus on three or four primary essential skills means that the other essential skills are largely neglected. Other life skills are not generally included in the programming, either.
- Most programs focus on essential skills training as a separate component or module of the trades training, or even as a self-study or Internet module for participants to use on their own. While the modules and training programs use trade-specific examples and language in their instruction, they are still not truly integrated into the trades training, which may be a strong reason the essential skills do not always seem to transfer to the workplace.
- Teaching styles and practice are also not addressed well in the literature and current programming. This is a concern for two reasons. First, many of the essential skills training programs in Canada rely on workbooks and other static materials for instruction. While this method will work for some learners, it does not show responsiveness to the diverse learning needs of the population. Learners with gaps in reading and document use skills will likely have difficulty learning solely from workbooks or website resources. Second, without effective instructor training, the essential skills concepts cannot be properly integrated into and reinforced throughout the trade-specific curriculum.
- There is a need for quantitative research on the effectiveness of essential skills training beyond the Red Seal exam results. Any program plan should consider long-term, qualitative tracking of the participants through their careers, along with quantitative assessment to determine more immediate results.

The findings from the report show that the following recommendations should inform the program planning for other programs:

- **Essential skills should be integrated throughout the curriculum.** Delivering essential skills in one block of instruction or as a stand-alone self-study unit will not ensure the transfer of the life skills and essential skills learning into the trade-specific instruction or into the workplace. Continuous repetition and follow-up on these concepts through the trade-specific training is required to create more well-rounded and capable apprentices.
- **The program should go beyond reading, document use, and numeracy training.** A number of models show that programs that incorporate life skills as a fundamental building block for the essential skills training are successful. The programs should therefore incorporate life skills such as time management, anger management, conflict resolution, listening skills, retention, and note-taking into the training. In addition, the other six essential skills identified by HRSDC should also be covered. Even though these six are not typically considered essential to trades employees, the transfer of essential skills into the workforce requires a more holistic approach that considers all of the essential skills (especially continuous learning and thinking ability) along with the life skills mentioned above.
- **Instructor training is a key component of effective programming.** To incorporate life skills and essential skills and ensure they transfer to further learning and workplace environments, the plumbing subject matter experts will need to be trained in effective delivery of essential skills. Furthermore, the curriculum should be designed so that essential skills are emphasized and

reiterated throughout the learning process, not simply delivered in one block of instruction. Instructor professional development is a key component of a successful, sustainable program.

- **Program evaluation must be considered carefully.** A mix of independent longitudinal, qualitative assessment and more short-term quantitative evaluations should be used.

Commentary

The study reiterates the need for learning to be contextualized and integrated into longer-term programs. Of particular interest is the need for more longitudinal program evaluation. While our discussions with stakeholders for this engagement must certainly be considered as having limitations due to the relatively small number (and ability of participants to respond to questions), a general theme of findings is that there is a weakness in the setting of goals for programs and the longer-term follow-up with participants on a more holistic basis. While there is literature to support the effectiveness of such programming (for example, referenced in the “Pathways to Education” model later in this report) if the problem is to attract the attention of politicians and industry commensurate with the magnitude of the problem and “lost opportunity”, then more “home grown” evidence of success will be desirable to make further gains, especially with smaller businesses. Moreover, this kind of information will be essential as the Province of Alberta transitions to a Results Based Budgeting approach.

3. Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES)

Note: The following discussion has been derived from the TOWES web site.⁴⁷

TOWES, developed and owned by Bow valley College, is an assessment system that allows employers, educators and labour organizations to assess an individual’s skills for everyday tasks associated with work, learning and life. TOWES is different from other assessment systems in that it:

- Uses authentic workplace documents - such as catalogues, order forms, labels, and schematics - as source material, unlike many academic tests, which assess grammar, composition skills and factual knowledge.
- Measures the three essential skills that are needed for safe and productive employment: Reading Text, Document Use and Numeracy.
- Uses questions that range in difficulty and mimic actual workplace tasks. The test taker assumes the role of a worker who needs to use information embedded in the documents.
- Has been validated through extensive field-testing across Canada. It links with a major initiative of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada that has profiled the essential skills needed in over 200 different occupations.

TOWES has a broad range of applications which include:

- Assessing workers’ potential for recruitment, selection and succession planning.
- Career planning based on individual strengths.
- Training programs (work-based essential skills training, placement).
- Measuring educational gains and readiness for learning in college or institutional programs.
- At-risk learner support.
- Literacy assessment for new Canadians.
- Research.

There are different versions of TOWES:

⁴⁷ Bow Valley College, Test of Workplace Essential Skills, <http://www.towes.com/en/home/home>. Accessed September 3, 2012

- The General Series are generic, multi-level assessments that can be used in a wide range of situations.
- The Sector Series are industry-specific tests designed for the Essential Skill requirements of the targeted sector.
- Custom Assessments can be developed on-demand for corporate customers, based on their needs.

Research involving apprentices at NAIT found that TOWES was an effective tool in identifying those at risk of failure due to poor essential skills, and demonstrated that short and focused interventions can significantly increase completion rates and improve test results on provincial examinations.

Commentary

Initial assessment is a key component for the planning and delivery of foundational learning programming. While this is one example and other methods exist, outcomes are enhanced when the assessment is contextualized to the job requirements and backgrounds of individuals. Proper assessment will help to ensure a fit with learner needs and enhance success rates as cultural, isolation and other barriers can be managed.

4. Sunchild E-Learning

Note: The following discussion is developed from the Sunchild E-Learning web site.⁴⁸

In 1999, members of the Sunchild First Nation, near Rocky Mountain House, considered the lack of education in their community and decided that alternative methods were needed to reach Aboriginal students. They discovered that:

- Aboriginal students faced unique challenges including family and legal situations, time away from class and relocating to new homes.
- Many Aboriginal students were adults. These students wanted to upgrade and build a better future while meeting their current schedules and responsibilities.

Any successful education program would have to overcome these challenges with a new way of teaching. In addition, high quality education and experienced teachers would have to be brought to small numbers of students in remote locations -- without exceeding limited education budgets.

The Sunchild E-Learning model was adopted as a solution. Sunchild E-Learning is different from conventional distance learning programs in that it creates accountability and interaction between student and teacher. Students are expected to be logged into the computer during class times and can speak with the teacher at any time through text messaging or a microphone. In most cases, students work from a classroom environment where a "Key Teacher" addresses technical concerns and ensures student participation.

Experienced teachers with a passion for teaching First Nations students head the online classes, providing a level of education that is claimed to be the same or better than that found in urban schools. Students who miss class time or change residences can easily catch up by reviewing archived classes. This system also allows students to work at a comfortable pace. Achievement is tracked on a weekly basis so that intervention and support can be provided as soon as it becomes necessary.

⁴⁸ Sun Child E-Learning. <http://www.sccyber.net/> Accessed on August 22, 2012.

The Sunchild E-Learning Community has met with success. In the 10 years since inception, it has received a number of awards including The J. W. McConnell Family Foundational Award for the *top project or for student retention from across Canada*. More recently, new postsecondary programs have been developed with NAIT and DeVry.

Major corporate sponsors or benefactors include: Nexen; Encana; PennWest Energy; Northwest Tel; TransCanada; and Conoco Philips.

Commentary

In our view, the Sunchild method has the potential to be modified for use in many Northern Alberta learning situations, and we note (from Chapter 2) that similar approaches are employed, in some circumstances, by Northern Lakes College.

5. Khan Academy

Note: The following discussion is developed from the Khan Academy web site.⁴⁹

The Khan Academy, in operation since 2004 and now with significant backing from the Gates Foundational, is rapidly gaining attention for its innovative use of YouTube videos and software such as Microsoft Paint to deliver effective, self paced and free tutorials with graphics that are simple and easy to follow.

To date, over 3,000 different types of tutorials have been produced. While there is a considerable range in the skills level required, a large number are at the very basic level.

In the case of mathematics, for example, material is kept fresh by the random generation of new practise problems. Students can “pause” and reference other tools that break the problem and process into easy to understand steps and concepts.

The software “remembers” where students “left” the lesson and provides feedback on what students have learned and where time has been spent. Students and teachers can use the data to gain feedback of weaknesses and other related skills and concepts that might be developed.

Students can also monitor their own progress and gain feedback through the awarding of “badges” at different levels based upon progress and achievement.

Commentary

While the “Khan System” may not be a panacea for all essential skills problems in Northern Alberta, the graphic methodology may be particularly suitable in a distance delivery foundational learning approach for subjects such as math (for which test scores, in many instances, in Northern Alberta are poor). With the use of software like Microsoft Paint, there is a facility for instructors or tutors to play a more hands-on role and provide instant feedback using drawing and graphics that can be contextualized according to the circumstances of students.

The Khan approach may be worthy of a pilot project in combination with other initiatives such as Sunchild E-learning, (which has shown that computers can be effectively integrated into distance learning approaches for remote/rural and Aboriginal students) or the Pathways to Education tutoring model (starting on page 70) which could also be modified in some instances to utilize Sunchild and Khan Academy approaches.

⁴⁹Khan Academy web-site. <http://www.khanacademy.org/about> Accessed on August 23, 2012.

5. Feltham Community College
(Tracking learners with multiple barriers)

Note: The following discussion is developed from the “Excellence Gateway” web site.⁵⁰

Feltham Community College (FCC) is located in the west of London, England community of Hounslow. In addition to the mainstream school, FCC also has three specialist units:

- Autism Resource Centre, (ARC);
- Centre for students with physical disabilities (PD Centre), and
- Centre for students with behavioral issues (known as The BASE).

As such, a portion of the student population shares challenges faced by those in need of foundational learning or literacy, language and numeracy upgrading. For students enrolled in 10 week long *Entry to Employment* programs, FCC has introduced a new type of reflective practice into their learner review system which is having a significant effect on learners’ behaviour.

Many of the learners have multiple barriers to learning but through this reflective practice they increase their confidence and self-esteem and make good progress into employment.

FCC recognized the need to develop learners’ soft skills in preparation for their entry into employment. Initially they introduced a system where the tutors scored the learners’ development each week. This was changed to involve the learners more in the process and encourage them to self-reflect on each week’s successes and issues.

Each Friday learners complete a straightforward form on which they grade various aspects of their behaviour and development, such as attendance, punctuality, focus, attitude and coping with external and personal issues. The learners then include what went well and how they could improve.

This is then discussed with their tutor and the previous week’s scores are reviewed. Trends and external factors that have impacted on this are also explored. Learners gain a greater understanding of how aspects of their lifestyle or work pressures impact on their behaviour.

At the end of the 10-week period the scores are mapped out on a graph to show trends in each of the areas that have been self-evaluated. These are used by tutors as a discussion tool for the review process.

FCC uses this new information to identify issues that arise for the whole group; for example the impact of external tests or holidays on learners’ attitudes. When learners are at risk of exclusion, the self-evaluation and graphs provide a clear picture of their attitude and behaviour patterns.

This system is particularly useful for programs where learners have multiple barriers to learning, education and/or employment. The regular self-evaluation can be used as a cumulative record during progress reviews. This has been particularly helpful for learners who have difficulty remembering their performance further back in the term. The graphs are a useful tool for measuring progress and the impact which external influences have on learners’ success. The system enables providers and learners to monitor the achievement of skills which are not accredited in a formal, quantifiable format. The topics for evaluation can be changed to suit individual learners’ needs or issues.

⁵⁰ Tracking learners' progress and achievement - Feltham Community College.
<http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=Feltham>. Accessed on August 25, 2012.

Commentary

Within the context of best practices for foundational learning, the additional “takeaways” of such a system are:

- It requires students to be accountable for their studies and performance; and
- The graphic monitoring system allows for a formal evaluation of certain types of progress in a graphic or pictorial form that can be adapted to the contexts of students’ circumstances and is therefore more understandable for some students who may be particularly challenged.

6. West Nottinghamshire College (Tracking the progress of learners with learning difficulties)

Note: The following discussion is derived and summarized from the “Excellence Gateway” web site.⁵¹

West Nottinghamshire College is a further education college with the main campus situated in Mansfield, and Sutton in Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, England. The college offers further education to approximately 19,000 students in full and part-time education including courses for 14 - 16 year olds in collaboration with local schools. The programs include the majority of GCSE and A Level courses (roughly equivalent to high school graduation and senior matriculation, respectively), access to higher education and vocational apprenticeships that include bricklaying, plumbing, carpentry, gas fitting, painting and decorating, construction management, driving passenger vehicles, forklift truck driving and railway engineering. A variety of community and adult courses is also provided across the local area.

The College has a large number of students who receive additional learning support. The Additional Learning Support Service comprises five teams which cover:

- Deaf/hearing impairment;
- Visual impairment;
- Emotional/behavioural difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and mental health difficulties;
- Physical disabilities/medical needs; and
- Dyslexia, literacy, numeracy and ESOL.

Each team creates and develops a support package that ensures every learner is provided with access to their chosen curriculum area. To record evidence of the support given, a tracking sheet is used. The College also uses a tracking log in order to record the progress made by the student. The team members are interested not only the learner's progress within their curriculum area (lesson objectives) but also at their progress with regard to their learning difficulty (learner objectives). All Learner Support staff members are allocated 10% of their work time to complete the necessary paperwork for each learner. Historically this was all hand-written, apart from a few members of staff who typed their notes up. While the system was of real benefit to the students and gave the staff a chance to follow the progress of their learners, it did raise some issues in terms of confidentiality, portability, speed of information and resource-efficiency.

The College, therefore, decided to develop an electronic database in order to track the progress of its learners, as well as to monitor and review the effectiveness of support strategies and software. Using Microsoft Access, staff created a new database for tracking learner progress. The database enables the support staff to input information about support practice and changes in learner need. It is accessed via the College network, and only Additional Learning Support (ALS) staff can access the information as it is

⁵¹ West Nottinghamshire College: Tracking the progress of learners with learning difficulties
<http://archive.excellencegateway.org.uk/page.aspx?o=288240>. Accessed on August 25, 2012.

stored on the team's shared drive. The database deliberately has an uncomplicated look with a white background looking like a Microsoft Word document, to ensure that staff members are comfortable with its use. The database also allows the Support Coordinator to have an overview of support activity and examine and monitor practice. It can also assist the planning of potential specialist equipment and adapted resources to ensure inclusion within specific sessions.

The new system has improved the way of working on several fronts:

- A main improvement has been in the speed of recording evidence. The ALS staff can write-up their observations from lessons more quickly. This is partly helped by, where appropriate, duplicating existing information from previous lessons and amending.
- The new system also encourages more detailed observations and explanations to be recorded for each learner. It has also meant that the information is now all legible as some of the hand-written notes were not always clear.
- As the original system was paper-based, notes were physically located around the department. Now the level of confidentiality is increased, as staff members are required to log in to access the information regarding a particular student.
- The instant nature of using a centralized electronic system means that from one lesson to the next, as the additional support worker changes, the information is available immediately, instead of a paper version trailing behind. This is of particular use when lessons are taking place across more than one site. So portability and accessibility have been improved.

Commentary

Our research regarding other models hand practices has uncovered a need or desire to have information in a centralized location. This approach helps to foster such an objective. Effective evaluation techniques and procedures are also an important part of foundational learning delivery. The use of a database like Microsoft Access affords considerable flexibility in the analysis and sharing of data. Finally, the additional allocation of time for monitoring and evaluation of learner progress underscores the higher time requirements of some foundational learning programs and the need to provide resources that may exceed those considered necessary for “regular” students.

7. The Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) and Task-Based Delivery

Note: Parts of this discussion are summarized from the web site for the relatively new initiative and associated user guides.⁵²

The Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework (OALCF) is a competency-based framework that supports the development of adult literacy programming delivered through the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program. LBS helps learners transition to their goals of work, further education and training, or independence. The OALCF:

- Supports the development of task-based programming;
- Helps practitioners focus on strengthening the learner’s ability to integrate skills, knowledge and behaviours to perform authentic, goal related tasks;

⁵² Ontario Adult Literacy Curriculum Framework. <http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/oalcf/>. Accessed on August 28, 2012.

- Supports the development of contextualized programming that reflects the learner's culture, language and other features specific to the learner and her or his goal; and
- Builds on current literacy practice and strengthens the links between the LBS Program and Ontario's employment, education and training system.

As with contemporary thinking, the OALCF improves learner outcomes by supporting adult literacy programming that is learner-centred, goal-directed and linked to a broader system of service provision.

To achieve improved outcomes for learners, the OALCF:

- Uses a task-based approach to literacy training that helps learners use literacy skills to meet real-life challenges as students, employees and citizens;
- Focuses on learner transitions through the development of programming related to five distinct OALCF goal paths: employment, apprenticeship, secondary school credit, postsecondary and independence; and
- Has a common language for describing learner progress and readiness to transition to next steps that supports greater learner mobility and more effective referrals and service co-ordination.

When developing programming for learners, literacy practitioners start by asking, "What does this learner need to know and be able to do to be prepared for their next steps beyond LBS *that this learner can't do now?*" and "What credentials or other proof of learning does the learner need to meet the criteria to enter the goal?"

By answering these questions, a practitioner makes decisions about content and any other supports that a learner might need.

As drawn from the Practitioner Guide to Task-Based Programming,⁵³ a brief summary of principles, elements and differences with other approaches follows.

Principles

The key principles include:

1. Task-based delivery is effective as research confirms that knowledge is maintained better when applied and integrated into daily life.
2. Adults are more motivated by program content that is immediately relevant and applicable.
3. Task-based approaches have been validated by many literacy and essential skills programs.
4. The methodology is backed by a consistent evaluative methodology contained in the OALCF.
5. Task-based programming support fair and reliable assessment practices.
6. The model supports, and is in keeping with, the three levels of Essential Skills complexity.
7. The approach fosters the use of day to day language that is easily understood by participants.⁵⁴

⁵³ Practitioner Guide to Task-Based Programming, Ontario Literacy Curriculum Framework, Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/OALCF_Task-Based_Prog_Mar_11.pdf

⁵⁴ Practitioner Guide to Task-Based Programming, Ontario Literacy Curriculum Framework, Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
http://www.tcu.gov.on.ca/eng/eopg/publications/OALCF_Task-Based_Prog_Mar_11.pdf

Key Elements

The key elements of a task-based system are:

1. The learner’s short-term and long-term goals.
2. Contextualization, or framing according to the “learner’s world”.
3. The requirements of the learner’s goals.
4. The development of goal related tasks that are consistent with learner’s goals (for example, somebody wishing to pursue higher education might need to learn how to take notes).
5. Task-based assessment using authentic materials.
6. The development of a learner plan that includes goals, indicators of achievement and readiness, identifies supports, outlines program elements and integrates all into a plan that is specific and actionable by the learner.

Differences with Other (Skills-Based) Approaches

A brief overview of the differences between skills-based and task-based approaches to learning is presented in the following table.

Task-Based Compared to Skills-based Approaches

	Task-based	Skills-based
Goal Identification	Short-term goals are identified with practitioner assistance. Practitioner then maps out embedded tasks and required skills and complexities.	Long and short-term goals are identified with practitioner assistance. Goals are analyzed to identify embedded skills and levels.
Learner Plan Development	Based on short-term goals and necessary tasks.	Based on skills and levels required.
Content Planning	Begins and ends with goal related tasks. Daily learning activities are selected, as required.	Begins with learner’s starting point and ends with skill level required. Based on learner’s needs and practitioner’s resources.
Use of Materials	Selected from a variety of sources to develop necessary knowledge, skills and behaviors.	Practitioner introduces materials that are related to learner goals.
Escalation	Skills building activities are introduced when the lack of component skills interferes with the completion of the tasks.	Practitioner introduces authentic goal related materials and activities that demonstrate increased skill acquisition.
Monitoring	Ongoing assessment of learner’s performance with goal related tasks.	Skill acquisition determined from ongoing tests, exams, quizzes and demonstrations.
Measurement	Goal completion when learner can do all planned activities.	Goal completion when learner can meet plan goals at identified skill levels

Commentary

The “curriculum” and approach reflect more state-of –the-art thinking in the design and delivery of essential skills. They may be worthy of consideration in any future planning of programming, particularly in relation to specific occupations. A discussion of occupations forecast to be in higher demand and suitable for foundational learning training, as well as the specific skills types required and difficulty level is contained in Chapter 4.

II Models for Creating Pathways and Building Capacity

1. Promoting Essential Skills and Apprenticeship Training in Aboriginal Communities

Note: The following summary has been summarized from the report of the project.⁵⁵

From December 2010 to June 2011 the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum held workshops in 29 Aboriginal (First Nations heritage, status and non-status, Métis, Inuit) communities across the country. The workshops focused on creating awareness about Essential Skills tools and conducting Essential Skills interventions. Workshop participants included employment counsellors who work with Aboriginal clients as well as economic development officers, apprenticeship counsellors, and trades program coordinators. The majority of the participants were employment counsellors who worked on reserves for their First Nation.

A succinct summary of the key findings and recommendations is presented below.

Characteristics of Useful Tools

Useful tools are:

- Trade specific,
- Culturally relevant,
- Accessible,
- Easy to use,
- Adaptable, and
- Free.

Intervention Best or Promising Practices

Key points identified included:

- Assessment questions should use culturally relevant examples.
- Integrate life experiences and not just work experiences to develop essential skills.
- Build on existing skills and track progress in a way that is understandable to the client/student.
- To allay discouragement and a sense of overwhelmed, guide the client/student when conducting activities such as assessments.
- Ensure that action plans have achievable goals and realistic time frames.

Actions to Enhance the Presence of Aboriginals in the Trades

For practitioners:

- Improve management and monitoring activities by coordinating assessments, improving opportunities for communication and establishment of centralized resource repositories.
- Increase the depth of knowledge about essential skills by developing and facilitating programs that are sensitive to Aboriginal culture (such as *An Aboriginal Essential Skills Journey: Planting the seeds for growth*).
- Produce a step-by-step guide offering promising practices on how to conduct a full-scale intervention with learners.
- Provide opportunities to network on an ongoing basis with employers and unions about potential job openings.

⁵⁵ Canadian Apprenticeship Forum; Promoting Essential Skills and Apprenticeship Training in Aboriginal Communities Across Canada, A Summary of Discussion Findings

For learners:

- Start promoting Essential Skills at the high school level.
- Provide more opportunities to “connect” with industries or trades such as more opportunities to meet trades people so they can learn first-hand what it is like to work in the trades, apprenticeship requirements, and ongoing networking with industry to learn about hiring processes, hiring schedules, and workplace readiness is required.
- Provide more Aboriginal community/stakeholder-based pre-employment and essential skills upgrading support.
- Help to overcome other barriers such as poor physical fitness, inability to cover relatively minor costs or the ability to obtain a driver’s license.
- Additional upgrading and exam preparation prior to taking the apprenticeship Certification of Qualification examination is also helpful for individuals.

Other Recommendations and Follow-up Items

- Explore opportunities to support ongoing Essential Skills training programs for those counsellors and coordinators who work with Aboriginal clients. This might be accomplished via:
 - Creation of an information network to share information on resources, financial and training programs available and best practices in other jurisdictions;
 - Creation of step by step guides that are suitable for Aboriginal clients/students;
 - Creation of more opportunities for high school educators to learn about essential skills and available tools; and
 - Communication of the value of career awareness programs that offer Aboriginals the opportunity to gain exposure to the trades.
- Identify additional unions and employers who may be interested in meeting with those working with Aboriginal clients to come up with practical solutions that will enable Aboriginal peoples to get work in the trades. A possible adjunct might be to create an on-line mentoring network so Aboriginal youth or apprentices can connect with Aboriginal trades people and learn about what it is like to work in the trades.

Commentary

While the specific context of the initiative is Aboriginal and Apprenticeship related, the findings and recommendations related to contextualization and “culturalization” of content, provisions for sharing information, and creation of pathways via mentoring, industry orientation and networking are important for any model pertaining to delivery of essential skills and can/should be adapted to any specific group or market.

The discussion of recommendations makes reference to physical fitness. While it is recognized that many individuals enrolled in foundational learning programs are affected by disabilities, we suggest that it may be desirable to explore how fitness might be integrated to a greater extent in, for example, the lifestyles components of essential skills programming. This might be accomplished in a more passive way such as via occasional “walking classrooms” or a more specific means such as culturally sensitive morning “stretching” (as with some Japanese companies). In addition to improved academic performance, we suggest that gains may also be realized in terms of sense of accomplishment and feeling of belonging.

2. Pathways to Education Model

Note: The following discussion and analysis is summarized from the Pathways to Education web site.⁵⁶

Overview

The Pathways to Education program was developed in 2001 to address the extremely high (in excess of 70%, in some instances) high school drop-out rate and poor progression to postsecondary studies (lower than 20% in some instances) in the economically disadvantaged Toronto neighbourhood of Regent Park. Since 2001, the program has been studied extensively, with success confirmed by organizations such as the Boston Consulting Group, and expansion has occurred to 10 other neighbourhoods across Canada with 4,000 participants each year. By 2016, the annual number of participants and alumni is expected to exceed 10,000.

Pathways to Education is a community-based program that works in partnership with governments, social welfare agencies, and hundreds of diverse volunteers who share their talent and wisdom, Pathways is helping to break the cycle of poverty and enable strategic, long-term social change.

The Pathways to Education model works alongside the school system, providing after-school tutoring, mentoring and financial assistance to address the barriers that can stand in the way of education. Each student benefits from a personal relationship with their Student Parent Support Worker – part counsellor, advocate, confidante, social worker, and mediator – who motivates and guides students and their families, brings insight that can't be found on report cards, and holds students accountable to the contract they sign in order to participate in the program.

The organization is funded by grants from organizations such as the Government of Canada, the Trillium Foundational of Ontario, the United Way and donations from private businesses and individuals.

Key Tenets

Some of the key tenets of the MBA program are discussed briefly below.

Tutoring

Tutoring sessions focus on homework and study assignments, as well as prepared exercises and other learning activities to help students develop as competent learners, while boosting literacy, numeracy and general knowledge. Tutoring, by volunteers, most of whom are university students is available four nights per week in a safe, social environment. Volunteers are supervised by paid staff. Participant attendance twice a week is obligatory if marks fall below a certain level.

Social Supports

Group mentoring is provided for Grade 9 and 10 students, while specialty and career mentoring is provided for Grade 11 and 12 students. Mentoring staff recruit and train volunteer mentors, who are typically university students, professionals or community residents. The overall goal of group mentoring is to provide pro-social and positive experiences where youth can further develop age-appropriate social skills, including problem-solving, team building, communication, and negotiation. As students progress, their mentoring becomes more specialized to help to raw out talents and interests.

Advocacy

Each student is assigned a Student-Parent Support Worker (SPSW), who monitors school attendance, academic progress and program participation, while helping the student build stable relationships with parents, teachers and other students.

⁵⁶ Pathways to Education. <http://www.pathwaystoeducation.ca/home>. Accessed on August 21, 2012

Financial Support

Pathways' financial supports were designed to remove financial barriers that hinder school participation. Bus tickets were provided to participating students for transportation to and from school and vouchers were provided as needed for school lunches. Students who fail to attend classes lose their eligibility for bus tickets and lunch vouchers.

Pathways also provides a financial incentive to participating students in the form of a \$1,000 bursary for each year Pathways Program participation during high school to a maximum of \$4,000 for post-secondary education or training.

Tracking Progress and Evaluating Results

Pathways to Education adopted an action-research and continuous improvement approach to the growth of the Program and its implementation by diverse communities. Established processes gather feedback from students, parents and volunteers in order to evaluate when the Program needs to improve and to better understand how Pathways is making an impact on the lives of participants. Information gathering tracks satisfaction among participants, the development of staff relationships with students, parents, volunteers and schools, as well as how students are feeling about themselves and about their future.

Financial Costs and Return

In 2009, the cost per student is approximately \$4,000 per year in the Ontario Pathways Programs and \$3,500 in Quebec. Financial incentives and assistance (including the bursary) account for \$1,800 of this amount, and \$2,200 was for program delivery costs (primarily staffing). A cost-benefit analysis conducted by the Boston Consulting Group in 2007 concluded that every dollar spent by Pathways has a \$25 return to society. The analysis found that the cumulative lifetime benefit to society was \$400,000 per Pathways graduate.

Commentary

The "Pathways" program/model is now endorsed by the Government of Canada with annual funding allocations of \$6 million through to 2013-14 at which time, the program will be reviewed.

The remoteness and lower population levels of Northern Alberta introduce potential problems with the critical mass of participants likely to be required to be financially viable in most instances, nevertheless, there are aspects of the program that might be modified or applied to a Northern Alberta context. In particular, planners should not lose sight of the importance of the tutoring, supports and advocacy aspects, and work in this regard may be advisable with organizations such as School Districts to engage students at an early age.

The use of Social Impact bonds (discussed starting on page 85) with financing provided by regional major employers and in conjunction with the NADC Bursary program or Aboriginal funding agencies such as Indspire (http://indspire.ca/about_indspire) and the "Building Brighter Futures" program, might provide a mechanism to provide a performance based bursary to be used for higher education for Aboriginal students.

For students not participating in Government of Alberta social programs, such as Job Corps or Alberta Works, the concept of "Educational Maintenance Allowances" (EMAs) is discussed starting on page 87 and, in principle, might be a vehicle to provide the funding to address day to day barriers of students, as in the Pathways to Education model. Student internships or work experience components might be a vehicle for employers to recoup such costs, especially if the experience can be framed around mentorship opportunities involving more simplistic activities normally completed by staff with more experience or training.

3. Industry Shared Model

Note: Parts of this discussion are derived from *Becoming State of the Art: Research Brief No 1”, Industry Shared Approaches, Aligning Literacy and Essential Skills with Economic Development”,* published by Essential Skills Ontario.⁵⁷

Industry Shared approaches involve employers and service providers in the co-design and delivery of training in order to leverage employment opportunities for job seekers with complex needs and foster economic development. The growing recognition, as is the case with Northern Alberta, that there will be a need to engage traditionally underutilized or disengaged segments of our populations to address impending labour shortages provides currency to such models or approaches.

While employment and training service providers have grown to understand the need to expand relationships with employers and industry groups, too often the relationships are not entirely “authentic” leading to a lack of occupational specific skills for participants that would lead to better opportunities for employers and job seekers. The article notes that service providers often question whether the public system should be providing services traditionally thought to be the purview of employers and employers find the training system to be complex and difficult to navigate.

The following table, devised from the report, summarizes the differences between “Traditional” approaches and “Industry Shared” Approaches.

Differences between “Traditional” Approaches and “Industry Shared” Approaches

Traditional	Industry Shared
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on increasing foundational skills of participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on solving problems faced by disadvantaged individuals and local industry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transactional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relational
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operate within existing funding systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Works with funding systems and industry to improve work force talent and employment rates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distinct boundaries defined by organizational roles and practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flexible partnerships to solve problems and enhance value
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supply-side focus on human capital development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local economic development orientation that more quickly aligns supply and demand

Moving essential skills training from being a “feeder” system for other training to a demand-side approach, geared to the immediate market needs of employers, could help to address such problems. From the report, a number of examples of where and how this change is starting to occur are discussed briefly below.

- In the United Kingdom, the government has begun to re-engineer the training system by the “Employer Ownership of Skills” program. The focus of work force training has moved from institutional funding to industry led funding.
- In Queensland, Australia, the “Skill Plan” includes a range of actions that are dedicated to measuring employment needs, and skilling and labour market development at the local level through demonstrated partnerships with industry groups.
- The “SkillWorks” initiative in Boston, Massachusetts, is a five-year effort focused on helping low income individuals, especially those on social assistance, to improve skills to improve labour force

⁵⁷ *Becoming State of the Art: Research Brief No 1”, Industry Shared Approaches, Aligning Literacy and Essential Skills with Economic Development, Essential Skills Ontario.*
http://www.essentialskillsontario.ca/sites/www.essentialskillsontario.ca/files/Industry_Shared_Final_0.pdf

attachment with entry level health-care and hospitality occupations. Participants in the four streams of the program had cumulative completion rate of 78% and employment rate of 78%. Starting wages averaged \$11-\$13 per hour compared to the state-wide minimum wage of \$7 per hour.

- Furthermore, according to the paper, in New Zealand, case studies on a range of language and literacy programs indicate that industry shared approaches, when combined with vocational skills and career pathways resulted in greater measurable increases in student persistence, progress and outcomes when compared to traditional approaches.
- Lake Land College in Illinois, in conjunction with John Deere (who provided paid internships and student mentors), has launched a “Transportation Bridge Program”, which helps students with developmental reading and writing challenges to obtain a transportation certificate. The college contextualized manuals from John Deere to develop the program and integrated work-based scenarios for listening, reading and communications skills.
- Finally, in Canada, the Canadian Steel Trade and Employment Congress (CSTEC) has worked with employers, unions, education and training institutions and government to provide training that can be applied to specific work places and areas of skill development.

The report notes that, according to the Aspen Institute, there are four common principles for success with Industry Shared approaches that are summarized below:

1. They must target a specific occupation or set of occupations within an industry based on the potential that exists for proving employment within specific geographic communities.
2. They must be flexible and engaged in, and add value to the industries.
3. They must aspire to leverage employment opportunities for participants.
4. They act as a lever to create innovative solutions for job seekers and employers.

Other important considerations may be:

- Students may need an opportunity or means to explore potential career pathways.
- There may be a need for greater creativity in the use of moneys that governments provide to address employment, training and other social problems.
- Employers may need to move closer to consider every person as a “solution to contributing” to the work force.

Commentary

The model notes the importance of strong relationships between educators, students and employers in helping to address skills problems and provides examples of mentorship and work place experience situations that may also serve as a platform for addressing funding issues barriers faced by students. In this regard, more simple and basic experiential activities completed by students (who may be disadvantaged) may have a financial value, which lends itself to small allowances or payments to students that have been shown to be effective in fostering retention in programs and a sense of pride, accomplishment and belonging in students. Employers are able to train employees with specific skills for specific jobs/functions rather than placing students in broader programs that may have content that is superfluous. This may be a mutually beneficial relationship as the student is exposed to a more simplistic and task oriented content that can serve as a platform for additional learning but can form the pathway to more immediate employment, and the employer has faster access to an adequately trained but less expensive employee. The potential for evolving relationships with an employee and employer who “know each other” then exists. Furthermore, the tasks performed by students may justify or provide an opportunity to pay “allowances”.

4. Organizational Models

Some emerging examples of foundational learning delivery models are summarized in the following table.

Delivery Models of Foundational Learning⁵⁸

Model	Discussion
Holistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A sole provider delivers all stages of the learner’s Foundational Learning journey, including the three curriculum components. • This model works most effectively in larger providers where there are many learners and staff resource is high.
Lead Provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead provider chooses to sub-contract components to one or more subcontractors. The lead provider retains overall ‘ownership’ of learners. • This model is likely to be more effective for small providers where resources are more limited.
Consortia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A group of providers work together to offer complementary programs. Each individual provider might be a Holistic model provider but each provider agrees to specialize in particular vocational sectors so that across the consortia a wide range of vocational sectors are offered. • Providers offer similar personal and social development and functional skills components and use the same accreditation system to enable learners to move around providers if they decide to choose a different vocational area. • The advantage of this model is that it allows Foundational Learning providers to specialize according to expertise or resource limitations.
Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A provider acts as the lead partner undertaking key – such as recruitment, induction, initial assessment and progress review – on behalf of the partnership. Learners are referred to the partner provider that can most effectively meet their needs in the three curriculum components. Overall responsibility for the learner rests with the lead provider. • The advantage of this model is that a third party ensures that the learner is appropriately referred, acts as an anchor of support and is able to monitor the learner’s progress during their programme and refer them to another provider if necessary.

Commentary

Due to the remoteness of Northern Alberta, and smaller population bases that might not provide the necessary critical mass to warrant programming, a Consortia model approach would appear to be the most feasible. The “consortia” might need to be extended to include a wide range of stakeholders. With this model, common accreditation, management and information sharing systems and policies might need to be developed.

5. System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES)

Note: The following discussion has been developed from the SABES web site.⁵⁹

SABES was established in 1990 by the Massachusetts Department of Education (which continues as the funder) in recognition that there were over 1.5 million people within the State who needed to improve literacy levels.

⁵⁸ Effective Partnerships for Foundational Learning, p 18.
<http://repository.excellencegateway.org.uk/fedora/objects/import-pdf:1768/datastreams/PDF/content>
 Accessed on September 4, 2012.

⁵⁹ SABES web site. <http://www.sabes.org/aboutus.htm>. Accessed August 25, 2012

Effectively as a “train the trainer model”, with five “hubs” throughout the State, the objectives of SABES are to:

- Promote high quality adult basic education services through training, support, and resources that improve the skills and knowledge of practitioners and strengthen programs; and
- Equip learners to succeed in the economy, contribute more fully to their families and communities, develop leadership skills and reach personal learning goals.

Much of the delivery of programming is now done online. Each of the five offices is beginning to specialize in a different kind of skill training. For example, the Boston office is beginning to specialize in teaching writing. Other offices specialize in reading or English as a second language etc. New staff entering the field get an orientation to some of the things they will need to know to work or teach, including an assessment tool for current programs.

The support services of SABES (including consultations, workshops, mini- courses, institutes, study circles, mentoring, peer coaching, teacher research projects and more) are publicized so people with an interest to explore the industry can find the training programs that will be of assistance. On the website, for example, a calendar of upcoming events is listed. The website also lists which programs are full and which ones still have spots available. SABES also works with existing programs to train their new employees.

Some of the specific tools and aides developed and used by SABES are discussed briefly in the following table.

Tools and Aids Developed and Used by SABES

BEST Plus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face interview with a student used to assess interpersonal communication skills using language and pictures from everyday life. • Used for ESOL students who want to improve speaking and listening skills. • Also includes seven hour program with 10 BEST Plus “ practice administrations.”
Massachusetts Adult Proficiency Tests (MAPT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comprises reading and math tests. • Web based. • Takes 90-120 min to complete.
TABE CLAS-E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides resources to assess language proficiency of non- native English language learners in areas of writing skills.
Curriculum and Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Database of teacher produced resources such as placement tests, classroom rubrics, lesson plans etc. • Resources for technology use (computers, multimedia, software programs etc.).

Commentary

In addition to offering a model for the professional development of practitioners, at a time when policies and standards for practitioners are still not clear in many jurisdictions, SABES also serves as a model for a clearinghouse of information. (The ability to easily access relevant information that can be shared by stakeholders has been identified as a desirable feature in other models explored such as “Essential Skills for Piping” and “Apprenticeship in Aboriginal Communities”.)

6. 1000 Women (Mulheres Mil)

Note: The following summary has been developed from the 1000 Women (Mulheres Mil) web site.⁶⁰

The objectives of this program are to focus on gender equity in access to education and the workforce with the ultimate result being improvements to family life, regional life, regional and national economic development and greater participation from disadvantaged women in the political process. The results should lead to an improvement in family life, regional and national economic development as well as a greater participation of disadvantaged women in the political process.

Principal participants, financiers and executors include:

Brazilian

- the Brazilian Cooperation Agency – ABC
- the Ministry of Education, through the office of Vocational and Technological Education
- the North East Network of Technological Education (13 colleges)
- the federal Centers for Education and Technology Technical School the North and Northeast

Canadian

- the Association of Canadian Community Colleges – ACCC
- 8 Canadian Community Colleges
- the Canadian International Development Agency - CIDA

Program participants primarily include women with the following characteristics or circumstances:

- Age range of 18-60 years;
- Low level of literacy;
- Learning disabilities;
- Poverty;
- Poor housing conditions;
- Low self esteem;
- Negative educational experiences;
- History of jobs with low pay and harsh conditions;
- Have a need for access to public services; and
- Lack family support.

Some of the key activities include:

- Sharing expertise in the hospitality and tourism industry provides unemployed women with programs to link them with educational and workplace opportunities.
- Development of systems, infrastructures, policies and procedure to provide access and training to target population (e.g. trained women in housekeeping to work in hotels).
- Implementation of tools and techniques of PLAR (prior learning assessment and recognition) that increased the access for the targeted population. This includes vocational training and technology to rescue self esteem, reset goals and help participants enter the world of work.
- Delivery of a generic core access program for the targeted population requiring academic upgrading (e.g. an education project helping women inmates obtain an education).
- Assessment of sector specific (tourism and hospitality) training needs for the region to meet economic development goals.

⁶⁰ 1000 Women (Mulheres Mil)
<http://international.niagaracollege.ca/content/Opportunities/InternationalDevelopment/CurrentProjects/ProjectsInBrazil.aspx> Accessed August 24, 2012

According to available program data, the Canadian experience using PLAR over the past 20 years in colleges has shown that it is an effective access and training system for marginalized or non traditional groups and helps benefit the broader community.

Commentary

We note that an obstacle still faced by many participants is prejudice in the work place, and while there is anecdotal evidence of success ⁶¹, we have not readily been able to locate any English language program evaluations or other budget data. That the program has been ongoing since 2007 may speak to its impact.

7. BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council - SkillPlan

Note: Parts of this summary and discussion are developed from the SkillPlan web site. ⁶²

Covering British Columbia and Yukon Territory, the goal of SkillPlan is to develop strategies to improve the essential skills of people working in the unionized construction industry. These essential skills include: Reading; Document Use; Numeracy; Writing; Oral Communication; Working with Others; Thinking; Digital Technology; and Continuous Learning.

Program activity, including tutoring, mentoring and study groups includes work site, online and classroom delivery (sometimes three to five day workshops). The “model” works to train individuals (apprentices and journeymen recommended by an employer) but also to “train the trainer” with groups including contractors, trainers and unions. Job profiling services are also provided to help workers identify the key skills that will help them to complete job tasks effectively and efficiently. This seems to be advertised as a tool for employers to ensure their employees are being fully utilized.

Funding for programming is provided by companies and unions in that collective agreements call for a contribution of one to two cents (depending on specific circumstances) for each hour worked by employees covered by the agreement. Other sources of funding include specific contributions by governments and others for whom programs or services are designed and delivered and sale of related learning materials etc.

Commentary

Aspects of this model/program that we believe may be of relevance in regard to the needs of foundational learning in Northern Alberta may include:

- The job profiling helps learners/workers to better appreciate how or why a particular skill is important; and
- The method of funding some services (a levy on wages of several cents per hour) may be an effective method of funding, especially if it might be collected on a broader scale (such as through a “Northern Alberta Skills Improvement Authority” umbrella organization and steps toward monitoring the outcomes of initiatives can be improved so that the “case” for investment in skills is better understood by all stakeholders.

⁶¹ Mulheres Mil

http://mulheresmil.mec.gov.br/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=99&Itemid=179&lang=en.

Accessed on August 27, 2012

⁶² BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council – SkillPlan. <http://www.skillplan.ca/> Accessed on August 20, 2012

8. Team Teaching/Summer Model

Under this model, proposed by the West Virginia Adult Basic Education program, a pre-college class is taught during a bridging space (such as between the end of a secondary school year and the beginning of a postsecondary year) by a “team” of Adult Basic Education and College level instructors. By also exposing students to a variety of educational delivery modalities (such as, for example, smaller group discussions and computer assisted learning) the goal is to provide essential basic skills so that students would be better prepared for their college experiences.⁶³

Commentary

A number of variations to this theme might be possible. In one instance, for more advanced students, the concept might fit courses or material that would be appropriate for “dual credit” scenarios in which the content was applicable for both a “lower” preparatory level or material that might fit with the early phases of some postsecondary programs.

The model has considerable potential for addressing some of the barriers faced by Northern Alberta foundational learning students:

- It helps to potentially reduce costs in that the travel and housing costs sometimes faced by students, as well as potentially higher tuition, would be partially offset.
- Other costs such as tuition might also be lower if the courses were delivered under the secondary as opposed to postsecondary systems umbrellas.
- It may help students to “ease” into more advanced education and allay certain socio-cultural” barriers such as reluctance to leave friends and families. For example, the location of programming might be in a school or buildings that are in a students’ home community so the “abruptness” of change is reduced. Furthermore, with the use of “ambassadors” who have had successful experiences, it might be possible to address other issues such as negative perceptions regarding the value of education (sometimes as a result of inter-generational poor performance and fear or anxiety).
- Study skills could be practiced in a stable environment and the student would be gradually exposed to other methods of learning (such as computer assisted) and it may permit a time for additional planning and reflection regarding opportunities and goals.
- Other aspects of the lives of students and their families that might change if studying away from home (such as child care routines) might be “practiced and perfected” with the help of other family members during the transitional period.
- While the method of delivery might be expected to be more expensive than traditional methods (two instructors for example), which may necessitate restrictions on availability, the issue might be offset in some instances. For example, a larger cohort of students with computer assisted or any other learning type skills may help to enhance the feasibility of other models, discussed in other sections such as “Sunchild” or “Khan”.
- The “cycle” of instruction need not be restricted to summer/autumn periods and could be flexible according to a variety of needs on both a full time or part-time basis.

⁶³ Adult Basic Education (ABE) and Community Colleges: An Opportunity for Collaboration
<http://wvde.state.wv.us/abe/documents/ModelsforABEandCTC.pdf>
<http://wvde.state.wv.us/abe/documents/ModelsforABEandCTC.pdf>

9. Advising Model

Advising models have the goal of increasing awareness of postsecondary options and admission requirements. While there can be a wide variation in terms of the intensity of activities, features include:

- Provision of information via workshops and presentations that students may attend; and
- A focus on individual rather than group “counselling”.⁶⁴

Two vignettes as to how the model has been put to practice are discussed below.

*Rio Salado College, Phoenix, Arizona*⁶⁵

At the Adult Basic Education Transition Program at Rio Salado College in Phoenix, Arizona:

- The first meeting addresses the student’s goals, motivation, and academic preparedness for college, including setting up placement testing.
- The second includes assistance with understanding, applying for and achieving any eligible financial aid.
- In subsequent sessions, students can explore support systems available on campus.
- Other aspects of the “package” have included preparatory seminars in subjects like algebra where instructors have “selected” students for scholarships based on performance and writing courses.

The practices have been shown to be effective in helping to promote the comfort and ease of students in new environments, develop new support networks and have led to students being more proactive in applying for financial aid. Drop- out and withdrawal rates for participants have declined and pass rates have increased.

*Springfield Technical Community College, Springfield, Massachusetts*⁶⁶

At Springfield Technical Community College (referred to as Springfield Tech or STCC) in Massachusetts, the program includes a significant amount of outreach and transition services to students coming to the college from Massachusetts Department of Education funded adult education programs in the region. Pre –algebra or keyboarding course have been provided to students for free to help to pre-emptively address common causes for failure. Finally, for students enrolled in GED programs to obtain high school equivalency, there is regular contact by advisors in an attempt to stress the importance of subsequent postsecondary education.

Commentary

A limitation of Advising Models in a foundational learning context is that they are normally focused on students who are better prepared academically to make transitions to more advanced studies. However, in the Northern Alberta context, there may be scope to include such activities and information as part of the assessment and ongoing monitoring process as:

- The time commitment required to obtain skills may be less than by other methods and this may be attractive for some adult students;

⁶⁴ Cynthia Zafft, Silja Kallenbach, and Jessica Spohn, *Transitioning Adults to College: Adult Basic Education Program Models*, NCSALL Occasional Paper, December 2006. P 15

http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/research/op_collegetransitions.pdf

⁶⁵ Ibid p 16

⁶⁶ Ibid p17

- The system tends to be open –entry and is therefore more flexible;
- They help to address problems such as lack of preparation and poor study skills; and
- Most aspects can be incorporated into existing counselling services at little or no extra cost.

Other possible limitations may include:

- Lack of a critical mass to make cost-effective (Phoenix and Springfield are both larger, urban centres) particularly for voluntary services;
- Skills development may be more superficial as learning experiences are shorter; and
- Students may not benefit from the camaraderie developed in longer programs.

Notwithstanding the above, with respect to financial support, we suggest that current efforts to advise current and prospective students of available financial support (existing or any new initiatives that may arise from this study) be reviewed to ensure that students are taking full advantage. Existing guidelines and regulations may be confusing and difficult to access or understand for some lower functioning individuals and opportunities may be lost. For example, we note that disabled and Aboriginal individuals (based on the example of Apprenticeship Completion Grants/Incentives) may be eligible for additional amounts.

10. Dual Credit Model

While traditionally thought of as being more applicable to more advanced high school students wishing to obtain college or university course credit, dual credit programs may have a place with foundational learning, especially for students who have demonstrated a strong commitment to their studies.

A discussion of a number of dual credit programs or models that may have particular applicability to the context of Northern Alberta is presented below.

*Alberta: Chinook's Edge Dual Credit Program*⁶⁷

Olds College and Chinook's Edge School District have offered dual credit by using Career and Technology Studies (CTS) and college credit in welding, equine, carpentry, machining, fashion and landscape construction on-site, online, and in blended environments. Students interested in participating must be approved by their high school. Students then complete an application package, including a responsibility agreement and a written statement of intent.

Dual Credit in Manitoba

According to the *“Dual Credit Initiative: An Innovative Pathway to Postsecondary Education”*:

- Selected courses of post-secondary institutions in Manitoba, mainly at the foundational level, may be registered with the Department of Education and designated as dual credit courses.
- Dual credit courses are currently offered by University College of the North, Assiniboine Community College, Red River College, Steinbach Bible College and Yellowquill College, as well as the University of Manitoba and University of Winnipeg.
- There are many benefits associated with the program. In the short term, the initiative offers students early exposure to the demands of post-secondary education, builds personal self-confidence as course requirements are completed, and provides motivation to continue education studies after the completion of high school.
- According to feedback obtained by Manitoba Education and Youth, 78 per cent of adult learners surveyed at the Brandon Adult Learning Centre indicated a strong correlation between taking

⁶⁷ Chinook's Edge School Division, Dual Credit Programming
<http://www.chinooksedge.ab.ca/Dual%20Credit%20Program%20.php> Accessed October 30, 2012.

dual credit courses and the benefits they attained at the post-secondary level. Furthermore, 47 percent of these students stated that having a dual credit t influenced their decision to move on to the next level of education.

- Other advantages cited were the increased flexibility and choice offered to students and the feeling of empowerment.⁶⁸

Ontario

As noted in a study completed by the Association of Community Colleges in April 2011, the Province of Ontario has a Dual Credit program run through the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities through the School-College-Work Initiative involving 66 School Boards and 24 publicly-funded colleges. The program allows students to participate in apprenticeship training and postsecondary courses, earning dual credits that count towards their high school diploma, as well as their post-secondary diploma or apprenticeship certification.⁶⁹

Nova Scotia

Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) offers a “College Prep” program which links high school and college programs to ensure student success. College Prep is a partnership with regional, district, and First Nations' school boards outlined by memoranda of understanding. College Prepworks closely with the Department of Education on the initiatives Options and Opportunities (O2), Youth Pathways and Transitions and with the Skills Nova Scotia Framework on portfolio, articulation, youth apprenticeship and skills education.⁷⁰

Commentary

The preceding examples indicate that the dual credit model has the potential to significantly allay potential barriers related to socio-cultural issues and may reduce costs because of shorter study times required for postsecondary credentials. Other benefits include the fostering of supports to students, for which the lack of has been considered a barrier. Dual credit programs are already well-established in other Canadian provinces such as Ontario and Manitoba. They may be particularly strong as pathways in trades, apprenticeship and applied studies programs. As evidenced by the media release for Alberta’s first dual credit symposium in October of 2010,⁷¹ it is a current priority of the Government of Alberta to explore ways and means to expand the dual credit model.

11. Career Pathways Model

As described in “*Transitioning Adults to College: Adult Basic Education Program Models*” key features of this model include: (1) teaching and learning of basic education and technical skills that are contextualized around a specific employment sector; (2) multiple levels of instruction; (3) curriculum that is “chunked” into clear steppingstones that are recognized by employers (e.g., specific certificates with increased job responsibilities and higher pay) and articulate to academic and career advancement pathways; and (4) intensive support services tailored to the expected challenges of the specific pathway (e.g., math and sciences for high-tech careers).⁷²

⁶⁸ The Dual Credit Initiative: An Innovative Pathway to Postsecondary Education.

http://www.gov.mb.ca/tce/docreports/otm_en_apr03.pdf. Accessed on September 25, 2012

⁶⁹ Canadian Association of Community Colleges, Transferability and Post-secondary Pathways: The Role of Colleges and Institutes, April 2011. Page 20

⁷⁰ Ibid. Page 21

⁷¹ Community Learning Campus hosts Alberta’s first Dual Credit Symposium.

<http://www.chinookledge.ab.ca/docs/library/Dual%20Credit%20Symposium.pdf>

⁷² Zafft, Cynthia Kallenbach, Silja and Spohn, Jessica *Transitioning Adults to College: Adult Basic Education Program Models*, NCSALL Occasional Paper, December 2006. P 15

http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/research/op_collegetransitions.pdf

Furthermore, “career pathways programs ideally work closely with area employers, municipalities, and community colleges to develop and implement contextualized curriculum relevant to prevailing employment trends. The model builds on short-term, academic steps for students and early successes in these steps are thought to increase long-term retention.”⁷³

Career Pathway programs can have multiple levels of instruction, depending upon the backgrounds, capabilities and needs of individuals, and there are examples of programs that allow individuals to proceed from very basic levels through to Master’s degrees in some fields. The Professional Enrichment Early Childhood Education (PEECE) Program in Boston, Massachusetts is one example. Students can enter the seven-tier education/training program without a GED, work towards a GED, then continue to earn a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential and students can continue on to earn an Early Childhood Education certificate, and then an associate degree in Early Childhood Education. Urban College has an articulation agreement with Lesley University, a four-year college where students earn a bachelor’s and/or a master’s degree.⁷⁴

Commentary

This model shares some of the characteristics of the “Industry Shared” (discussed started on page 70) and Foundation Learning (discussion started on page 102) approaches, yet provides a specific example of how the learning might be “laddered” to higher levels of credentials. It includes close liaison with stakeholders and is designed to provide learners with a route to employment upon completion. This is of great importance to adult learners who must understand “the purpose” of their studies. While a variation of the model already exists for Northern Alberta in the context of upgrading programs to the Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) credential, caution might be warranted if expanded to other “untested fields” to ensure that learners were truly prepared to proceed to higher levels. Otherwise, participants may be faced with frustration and extra time for remedial programs.

12. Manitoba Adult Learning Centres

Note: Much of the content in support of this discussion is derived from a directory of programming.⁷⁵

In Manitoba, Adult Learning Centres (ALCs) have been in existence since 1996 as part of the Province’s strategy to increase skills and provide adults with a “second chance”. Adult learning centres are tuition-free and teach skills and courses that result in either a completed high school diploma or a mature student high school diploma. They also provide students who already have a high school diploma the opportunity to upgrade specific courses that will enable them to access post-secondary education or employment opportunities.

Registration of an ALC is subject to meeting the requirements of *The Adult Learning Centre Act*, fulfilling accountability requirements established by the Registrar of Adult Learning and Literacy, and having sufficient funding for the operation of an adult learning centre. Centres are required, as appropriate to adhere to educational standards for the province and employ accredited staff. Some Adult Learning Centres have been established by charitable organizations or even trade unions or other associations on their own, and others have affiliations with school districts and/or postsecondary associations.

⁷³ Ibid. P 16

⁷⁴ Cynthia Zafft, Silja Kallenbach, and Jessica Spohn, *Transitioning Adults to College: Adult Basic Education Program Models*, NCSALL Occasional Paper, December 2006. P 25

http://www.ncsall.net/fileadmin/resources/research/op_collegetransitions.pdf

⁷⁵ Manitoba Adult Learning Centres

http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ael/all/directory/pdf/all_directory.pdf

A wide range of support services is provided and sometimes includes child care, provision for transportation and traditional counselling.

Testing and prior recognition of skills and knowledge is used to grant advanced standing for students to reduce the time requirements to complete their high school diplomas and dual credit and vocational streams are offered in some locations and intake is ongoing.

High school students may take up to four credits of studies toward a postsecondary program with no charge for the tuition.

Furthermore, as synthesized from the Adult Learning Centre's most recent Annual Report, in 2010-11:

- The Province contributed approximately \$16.5 million during the year toward the cost of the centres;
- Programming was provided through 45 centres in 86 locations;
- Approximately 9,300 students were enrolled of whom 531 were Aboriginal; and
- Approximately 12,900 courses were completed; and
- Approximately 1,440 individuals graduated.⁷⁶

Commentary

Adult Learning Centres appear to have considerable flexibility to adapt programming according to local needs, values and surroundings that are non-threatening, culturally sensitive and this and other services provided helps to reduce barriers to students.

The ability of students to "experiment" with postsecondary courses is a good outreach tool and can be expected to help to improve confidence and focus.

While we have some concerns about the relatively high cost of the program and relatively small level of activity in "remote, rural and northern Manitoba" (eight centres in the northern "Norman" district) aspects such as affiliations with other partners and the "no risk try" with postsecondary education, may be worthy of further exploration for Clearinghouse colleges.

In many respects, Manitoba Learning Centres are an extension of the Alberta Community Adult Learning Centre concept in which the centres are "access points providing personalized services for adult learners. Centres facilitate access to information, services and supports, and the full spectrum of foundational and post-secondary learning opportunities. They are "doors" to services. Depending upon the existing services and programs in a community, the Centre's role will be to coordinate, facilitate and/or deliver programs and services."⁷⁷ The principal difference is that in Manitoba, credit courses are also offered. The Manitoba model demonstrates innovative methods of collaboration and highly desirable local participation, cost/risk sharing and accountability.

⁷⁶ 2010-11 Annual Reports, Manitoba Literacy Strategy, Adult Learning Centres in Manitoba
http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/acl/all/publications/annual/all_ar_10_11.pdf

⁷⁷ Increasing Learner Access through System Alignment: Final Report of the Community Adult Learning Task Team, January, 2010. P 9

13. Wraparound Model

The Wraparound (or sometimes referred to as “Full Service”) Model is a promising emerging development at the elementary and secondary levels transferred from social services and mental health work or involving disassociated groups, such as refugees, that may have applicability to the needs and circumstances of rural and Northern Alberta.

“Initiatives in the US, the UK, the Netherlands and Australia have explored the idea of schools operating as full-service centres for their communities, typically disadvantaged communities with diverse populations, where community agencies and schools work in partnership to help overcome barriers to learning. In full wrap-around models, the schools are open seven days a week and offer a range of assistance to families. The school component includes academic, behavioral and social skills instructional strategies as well as consultation and supports for teachers. The agency component includes family services including settlement, employment, and dental and medical care. The wraparound approach incorporates a plan for services and supports that requires resources from more than a single school, system or sector. Wraparound is based on the belief that families should be equal partners in creating and implementing the plan, and that the plan should be focused on the strengths and assets of the child and family as opposed to focusing on traditional deficit-based practices.”⁷⁸

According to literature review work completed by Alberta Education, “Successes of wraparound/ full-service schools include academic gains, improvement in school attendance, a reduction in high- risk behaviours, increased parent involvement, lower incidence of child abuse and neglect, and lower rates of violence in the participating communities.”⁷⁹

Commentary

An example of the application of this model developed by the College of New Caledonia (Quesnel, British Columbia), in consultation with the college’s Aboriginal Steering Committees, involves 10 participants in each of Prince George, Quesnel, Mackenzie and Vanderhoof who will be entering the trades via classroom courses, where the college will provide supports for Aboriginal students in three areas: 1) Direct individual support provided by a Trades Support Worker/Industry Liaison; 2) Essential skills, academic upgrading, and job-readiness skills training; and 3) Additional individualized student supports.⁸⁰

Given many of the barriers faced by northern and rural Alberta foundational learning students such as housing, health, lack of family supports and childcare and negative views of education that can perpetuate inter-generational poor performance, as well as well as often feelings of “lack of fit”, an emphasis on additional tools to address them may be worthy of monitoring the outcomes of the College of New Caledonia initiative and exploration in terms of how the concepts might be integrated (possibly better) for foundational learning students within the NADC region.

⁷⁸ Teaching Refugees with Limited Formal Schooling. Accessed from <http://www.teachingrefugees.com/socio-emotional-supports/wrap-around/> on September 28, 2012

⁷⁹ Literature Search Findings on Wraparound/Full-Service Schools. Accountability and Reporting System Group, Alberta Education, 2008.

⁸⁰ 2012/13 Aboriginal Initiatives Trades Projects. Accessed from <http://www.itabc.ca/AssetFactory.aspx?did=2591> on September 28, 2012.

III. Models to Address Funding Issues

In this subsection, we present models or practises to address two gaps of funding for Foundational Learning:

- Provision of new funding for programming at a time when many governments are “stressed” financially; and
- How funding might be used to assisting students/clients to address the additional financial burden and/or providing “incentives” for performance.

1. Social Impact Bonds and Pay for Success Models

Non-profit and for-profit organizations may be able to take new approaches to achieve more cost-effective social outcomes. A prime example is Social Impact Bonds (SIBs). Through a SIB, a government contracts with a partner organization to deliver a particular service, with payment conditional on improvements to an associated social outcome. The delivery agency obtains funding from a private financier or philanthropic entity or other investors. If the social outcome is achieved, the social impact bondholder receives a risk-adjusted rate of return from the government, while the government saves money because the improved social outcome offsets future expenditures. If the venture is not successful, the investors are out-of-pocket.⁸¹ In our view, the nature of the mechanism fosters a need for success.

An innovative approach closely related to Social Impact Bonds are “Pay for Success” (PFS) models in which non-profits must demonstrate, for example, that by keeping youth from recidivism or the homeless from living in costly shelters, they have saved the state money. Those savings are then shared with the program’s providers and backers. New York City announced it will launch a PFS pilot⁸² to reduce youth recidivism for over 3,400 adolescent men coming out of incarceration from Rikers Island. Preventative education and counseling services financed by the pilot will be overseen by a program intermediary, MDRC (a non-partisan social research and educational organization) and will be delivered by two non-profit organizations, Osborne Association and Friends of Island Academy. Goldman Sachs will be investing in the pilot through a \$9.6 million loan, which will be backed by a \$7.2 million partial guarantee from Bloomberg Philanthropies.

The Non-profit Research Fund has provided the following comments about certain recent initiatives in Australia.⁸³

“Specifically in New South Wales, Australia, the government has chosen three public private partnerships to develop ‘Social Benefit Bond’ contracts over the next six months. A \$10 million bond will engage UnitingCare Burnside to work with at risk families over seven years and a second bond will fund The Benevolent Society, with Westpac Corporation and the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, to develop a \$10 million bond to provide service to 550 families over five years. Both of these bonds are aimed at reducing the number of days that children spend in foster care. Also, the Sydney-based division of Social Finance will work with

⁸¹ Commission on the Reform of Ontario's Public Services, Chapter 8
<http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/reformcommission/chapters/ch8.html#ch8-g>. Accessed August 27, 2012

⁸² News from the Blue Room: nation’s First Social Impact Bond Program
http://www.nyc.gov/portal/site/nycgov/menuitem.c0935b9a57bb4ef3daf2f1c701c789a0/index.jsp?pageID=mayor_press_release&catID=1194&doc_name=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.nyc.gov%2Fhtml%2Fom%2Fhtml%2F2012b%2Fpr285-12.html&cc=unused1978&rc=1194&ndi=1 Accessed August 27, 2012

⁸³ Non-profit Finance Fund. PFS News Round-Up March 29th: New Models in Pay for Success Financing Emerge in Australia <http://payforsuccess.org/blog/pfs-news-round-march-29th-new-models-pay-success-financing-emerge-australia>. Accessed August 27, 2012.

Mission Australia to develop the third bond totaling \$7 million that will assist 500 young adult repeat offenders for up to six years. In Australia the government is looking to guarantee a portion of the return to investors in one of the proposed transactions. This is significant because it means that the Australian government can successfully offload performance risk and structure the proposition for private investors in a way that gives first-mover investors a risk profile that is more palatable. With the growing momentum of PFS and SIB in various countries, we expect variations in structure to continue. We will be highlighting these structures and transactions as they emerge and will soon be providing the market with an overview of multiple risk/reward structures that may support a growing market for PFS and SIB transactions.”

Commentary

Government of Alberta Position

While Government of Alberta officials have indicated that they are still studying the concept of social impact bonds and, as such do not have an official position, indirectly, through Alberta Treasury Branches, the Government of Alberta has started to explore the use of social impact bonds. While the specific context is homelessness, we draw from an excerpt of an April 2012 press release from Canadian Newswire:

“The ATB Social Enterprise Incubator will be charged with building investor-ready businesses and investment vehicles designed to support ending homelessness in Calgary. The incubator will focus on three main areas:

- **Innovative funding models** - Create new ways for individuals, investment funds, foundations and government to invest and earn money while contributing to social good. These investments could be in the form of special bonds or GICs.
- **Social enterprise** - Help homeless serving organizations build businesses that generate revenue in support of their missions.
- **Transformation of assets** - Develop methods for donors to donate or invest land, businesses or buildings to a cause rather than traditional cash donations. The ATB Social Enterprise Incubator will help put these assets to good use.”⁸⁴

Government of Canada Position

“Economic Action Plan 2012 announces that the Government will continue to explore social finance instruments as a way to further encourage the development of government community partnerships. Building on these partnerships and the work of the Canadian Task Force on Social Finance, the Government will continue to support the momentum building around social finance initiatives and will explore social finance instruments. For example, social impact bonds hold promise as a tool to further encourage the development of government-community partnerships.”⁸⁵

Social Impact Bonds are a relatively new method of obtaining greater private sector involvement in addressing social problems such as employment, health, education and homelessness and are in keeping with the policies of some governments such as in the United Kingdom to privatize certain

⁸⁴ Canadian Newswire, Calgary Homeless Foundation and ATB Financial join forces

<http://www.newswire.ca/en/story/953291/calgary-homeless-Foundational-and-atb-financial-join-forces>

Accessed on August 28, 2012

⁸⁵ Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Budget 2012 Highlights - Aboriginal and Northern Investments

<http://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1314815272921/1314816043432> Accessed on August 31, 2012.

initiatives. Within Canada and Alberta Ministries involved in matters such as “Health”, “Advanced Education”, “Human Services” and “Aboriginal and Northern Affairs” appear to afford the best fit.

The approach is consistent with the view that there needs to be better and more innovative linkages with employers and the community in solving social problems and creating opportunities. Once the positions of the governments of Alberta and Canada become clearer, it is suggested that this vehicle or model may be suitable for pilot or demonstration projects with philanthropic foundations or major employers in Northern Alberta.

It will be necessary to develop goals and guidelines for the development and implementation of initiatives and there will be a need to ensure that there remains a longer-term perspective of higher standards, which is sometimes lost with privatization or public –private partnerships.

We suggest that a creative use of the form of financing might be in the realm of the Canada Education Savings Program, or in the provision of bursaries or scholarships or stipends/maintenance allowances (both discussed below) in a situation where “units of sponsorship” might be traded (say similar to carbon credits) for organizations to “sponsor” disadvantaged youth to be able to pursue advanced education. Some form of matching contributions might also be considered in an “instrument” eventually created, or a program might be based on a percentage of after tax earnings, as we understand is the case at present with contributions made by companies like Suncor and Cameco.

2. Education Maintenance Allowances (EMAs)

In places like Wales, Scotland, England and Northern Ireland of the United Kingdom, EMAs have been a financial scheme applicable to students and those undertaking unpaid work-based learning and aged between sixteen and nineteen whose parents had a certain level of taxable income. The United Kingdom program has recently been modified by the heavily indebted government as a cost cutting measure. The decision has proven to be very controversial. Below, we talk about the EMA program from an historical perspective.

In the “old English program”, applicants for EMA needed to be in full-time further education, aged 16-18 at the start of the academic year and come from a household with a combined income less than approximately \$50,000. Weekly payments to “approved” students ranged from approximately \$20 to approximately \$50, depending upon household incomes. Intermittent bonus payments were also awarded, depending on a student's course of study and achievement.

Evaluation of the Program and Policy Changes

The Labour Party claimed the EMA scheme was of great benefit to those teenagers from low-income households, encouraging people to stay in education past the legally required age of 16 (end of year 11; fourth year in Scotland) as it encouraged high attendance and had facilities for bonuses. In the last academic year, 89% of 16-year-olds in England stayed on in education or training - the highest rate since 1994.⁸⁶

In tests done by 56 of the 150 English local education authorities in 2004, the Institute for Fiscal Studies and Loughborough University found staying-on rates improved up 5.9 percentage points among those who were eligible. This effect was most pronounced amongst boys whose parents were unemployed or employed in unskilled or semi-skilled manual jobs - the group with lowest stay-on rates, and arguably facing the most social pressure to earn money and peer pressure that education is unimportant.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Wikipedia: Education Maintenance Allowances http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education_Maintenance-Allowance
Accessed on August 21, 2012

⁸⁷ Ibid. Accessed on August 21, 2012

A survey conducted by the Learning and Skills Council found that the majority of teachers in England believe paying teenagers to stay in education beyond the age of 16 has proved a success. 82% of further education teachers saw the education maintenance allowance (EMA) as a motivator for youngsters, and 61% of the 323 teachers polled said EMAs treated teenagers like adults. Furthermore, 84% thought the EMA helped prepare young people for the world of work, and 37% of teachers thought the scheme had had a positive impact on learning, even on those teenagers not eligible for the allowance.⁸⁸

Commentary

A study of Saskatchewan On-reserve Adult Basic Education also found that the provision of such stipends had a positive impact on attendance and applications to pursue additional training for on-reserve Aboriginals.⁸⁹

In our view, given apparent gaps in the level of funding for status or non-status Aboriginal students in particular, and lower academic performance, completion and transition rates reported in Alberta Education data for students in the NADC region, to encourage students to continue with studies, further research may be warranted to ascertain if such a program might be feasible and beneficial. We noted that finding from the Pathways to Education model (discussed on page 28) state that every dollar spent on education will have a \$25 return.

The payment might also be considered as a bursary” or might be an element of the “Career Pathways” or “Industry Shared” models in scenarios where low skills students are “paid” for their services performed while gaining work experience. In the later case, some of the risk and cost is transferred to the private sector or other stakeholders and it might be possible for the Government of Alberta to reduce support payments for Alberta Works clients which might free funds for other purposes. The system could be established in a manner that might enhance feelings of “fit” and accomplishment, both of which are barriers for some foundational learning students.

3. Bursaries and Completion Incentives/Grants

The Apprenticeship Incentive Grant and Apprenticeship Completion Grant are national programs that allow apprentices registered in designated Red Seal programs to receive up to \$4,000 in taxable grants to cover the cost of tuition, travel, tools and other expenses.⁹⁰ The programs were introduced in 2006 and 2009, respectively, to address a declining trend in apprenticeship registrations and completions.

Furthermore, the Northern Alberta Development Council has an existing bursary program, as a “home grown” solution to addressing skills shortages, albeit at the professional level. (Recipients must graduate and agree to return to and work in Northern Alberta for one year for each year of bursary assistance received, up to a maximum of two years.) Another example of a bursary is the Advancing Futures Bursary for children who have been under the care of the province to pursue postsecondary education.

Commentary

We suggest that extension of such models or principles to foundational learning situations may be worthy of further exploration, particularly given the problems faced by some learners in Training for Work programs upon expiry of their 30 month periods, which makes further study for some difficult because of lack of funding.

⁸⁸ <http://poster.4teachers.org/worksheet/view.php?id=106550>. Accessed August 21, 2012

⁸⁹ Cottrell, M et al, Saskatchewan On-reserve Adult Basic Education, Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit, University of Saskatchewan, 2011, page 50.

⁹⁰ Service Canada web site. <http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/eng/goc/apprenticeship/index.shtml>. Accessed October 5, 2012.

A bursary might also be structured on a “performance basis, as a “refund” or “nullification” of tuition upon successful completion might be appropriate. The amount might escalate with demonstrated progress toward completion of higher or fuller credentials or performance excellence, possibly on a model based on the amounts (with possible matching) in the Alberta Centennial Education Plan. For learners supported by Human Services, a bonus or withholding might be paid upon successful completion.

Clearly such plans or systems will require considerable additional review, however, the Federal Government’s positions regarding more innovative approaches and absence of commitment to some programs Aboriginal programs in particular, beyond 2015 may signal a place for such initiatives.

IV. Other Potentially Important Research in the Future

In the course of our research (including, unless otherwise referenced, from the data-base of the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills⁹¹) we uncovered a number of initiatives, or pilot projects that have yet to be concluded, or their results evaluated. Those that appear to be of potential value or interest are discussed in this Section.

1. Connecting Aboriginals to Manufacturing (CAM)

Workplace Education Manitoba Steering Committee (WEMSC), in partnership with Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Manitoba Division, Alliance of Manitoba Sector Councils, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and Manitoba Métis Federation, has received \$3.1 million over a period of 36 months. The funding is to test an innovative literacy and essential skills (LES) - based model (Continuum of Success Strategies, which is a contextualized and holistic approach with a credential upon completion) for increasing labour market attachment of Aboriginal individuals residing in small and remote communities through employment in the manufacturing sector. If the model proves successful, it could potentially be replicated in other communities/employers in Canada. It would also potentially adaptable to other sectors beyond manufacturing. The project will seek to achieve the following specific objectives:

- To create the LES Continuum of Success Strategies model to support participants to integrate into the workplace will include:
 - an intake/assessment model for communities that includes consideration of relocation and commuter issues for potential participants and their families;
 - involvement of employers at the outset to identify and analyze LES workplace needs to act as the standard for the design of training;
 - a model of involvement and training for families of participants concerning commuting issues; and
 - LES-based training solutions that include mentorship and respect for culture.
- To test the model with four Aboriginal communities in Manitoba and four employers in the manufacturing sector to study results under different conditions (First Nation and Métis; degree of remoteness; Northern versus Southern Manitoba); and
- To conduct a full evaluation of the outcomes, and develop and disseminate a report.

Commentary

We recently contacted Dave Robertson, the coordinator of the project with Workforce Education Manitoba (Tel: (204) 272-5037; E-mail: drobotson@wem.mb.ca) for an update.

⁹¹ Office of Literacy and Essential Skills Project Database. <http://www7.hrsdc.gc.ca/pr.4j.2ctse.1rch@-eng.jsp>. Accessed on August 21, 2012

The experiences with the first group of participants have been positive with 13 out of 16 completing the program. Aspects of the program that are particularly attractive include:

- The initial counselling and assessment, which includes a holistic family approach and prepares participants to leave their home communities;
- The ongoing “wrap-around support” that is provided;
- Program content which is contextualized but highly relevant and provides participants with a credential and a strong base of skills (welding, electrical, drafting etc) to consider further education; and
- Strong employer involvement and mentoring, which has led to pathways for employment for participants.

The project is to be completed by January 31, 2013, and in our view it is a strong candidate for further study or a pilot project.

2. Stepping Stones

Stepping Stones, funded with approximately \$1 million from the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, is a holistic, essential skills program designed to help Aboriginal community members living in remote communities realize personal educational and community capacity building goals. The pilot program will be offered from January – June 2012 to adults living in N’Quatqua, Samahquam, Sts’ailes and Soowahlie communities of British Columbia (remote upper Fraser Valley).

The project will seek to achieve the following specific objectives:

- To increase access to literacy and essential skills training for Aboriginal learners in rural communities through the development of a model and online tools;
- To increase stakeholder awareness and use of new interactive, online essential skills and literacy training tools that are designed to overcome the barriers experienced by rural Aboriginal populations; and
- To develop the capacity of Aboriginal communities to assist Aboriginal learners in training for Literacy and Essential Skills.

The delivery model blends online and in-person learning, offered through a wide-range of authentic, directly relevant, and hands-on activities. A cohort of learners will attend a learning centre twice a week in their community. An online Simon Fraser University (SFU) instructor and a community-based tutor-mentor will guide learners through the steps of planning, implementing and evaluating a meaningful community project that contributes to a longer-term community identified goal. Learners who successfully complete the program will be awarded a non-credit, SFU Certificate in Community Capacity Building.⁹²

Commentary

The project may be of considerable interest to Clearinghouse planners in that it includes a clientele with needs and circumstances as found in many communities in Northern Alberta. It employs leading edge technology for distant education combined with live human contact. It is also an example of how many best practices can be creatively incorporated into programming including:

- Use of tutors or instructors who have an empathy or appreciation for the backgrounds of their clients;
- Being contextualized to the backgrounds of clients, task-based and highly relevant because of input by clients in its development; and

⁹² Stepping Stones web-site. <http://steppingstones.sfu.ca/about-us> Accessed on August 21, 2012

- Use of “achievement milestones” (SFU certificate) that represent “bite-sized accomplishments”.

3. Collaborative Delivery of Foundational Learning for Rural Learners

The Collaborative Delivery of Foundational Learning for Rural Learners project will increase access to quality learning for rural learners in and beyond the stewardship region of NorQuest College through a technology-supported, collaborative delivery model. If successful, the model will increase flexibility to access foundational learning opportunities, specifically flexible part-time, pre-high school academic upgrading and intercultural education. The project’s vision is to contribute towards the ability of rural Albertans to connect with the learning opportunities they need to achieve education and career goals within their own community.

The model will leverage the advantage of Alberta Education referenced curriculum resources tailored to the needs of adult foundational learners through an online content management system, instruction delivered through videoconferencing and locally provided, learner supports adapted to learner needs within the community.

Four content streams will be piloted: foundational math, language/essential skills, Aboriginal literacy and intercultural education.

This project involves several key partners including: NorQuest rural campus learning sites; rural community learning organizations from across Alberta; the Innovative Communities Connecting and Networking (iCCAN) videoconferencing network; Castle Rock Research; and will include 12 rural Alberta communities.

The timeframe for the project is November 2011 to February 2014.

Commentary

The project appears to be very much in keeping with the needs and realities of Northern Alberta, including poor performance on Alberta Education exams. The players include organizations with which Clearinghouse members may desire to consider forging closer relationships. A potential eventual scenario might be that efficiencies may be realized through cooperative arrangements with Norquest College and the utilization of a range of other facilities in Northern Alberta that might also facilitate delivery via proven distance methods.

4. WorkUp!

In partnership with Alberta Workforce Essential Skills (AWES), Literacy Alberta (LA) has trained six experienced facilitators to become Workplace Essential Skills (WES) practitioners. All are currently providing essential skills training to businesses in their home communities. The businesses include a hotel, a bank, a casino, an employment agency, and a service company to the oil and gas industry. LA and AWES are to publish a final report, including a WES Marketing Tool Kit, on their websites after the project end in the spring 2012; however, both were not readily available at the time of writing this model review.⁹³

Commentary

Given the occupational and skills outlook that we have prepared for Northern Alberta, this report and model may be of particular interest to Clearinghouse member planners.

⁹³ Literacy Alberta web site. <http://www.literacyalberta.ca/newsletters?page=4>. Accessed on August 29, 2012

5. Integrating Foundational Learning

According to Calgary Learns, The Integrating Foundational Learning project has been a great success. Seven organizations funded by Calgary Learns were trained on how to include literacy and essential skills in their employability and community issues programs.⁹⁴ A final report and a Foundational Learning Checklist are to be published but were still not available at the time of writing this model review.

Commentary

From our discussions with some stakeholders, (summarized in Chapter 6) there seems to be an interest in delivering more “Integrated” foundational learning. The final report may provide good insights as to how this might be done.

V. Exploration of Activity in Other Countries

In the belief that there may be benefit and innovation from the adoption of best practices or learning experiences, afforded by other international jurisdictions, in this Section, we review some of the policies and practices and experiences of other nations that share characteristics with Northern Alberta or have been identified as being of interest, based upon our preliminary research:

- Australia;
- New Zealand;
- England; and
- Norway.

A. Australia

Australia, with a population of approximately 22.0 million as of July, 2011, currently enjoys a strong resource-based economy and parts of the country have characteristics similar to Northern Alberta in terms of the remoteness and low population density and indigenous populations. As such, it is considered to be a good “candidate” for this review.

This review relies, in part, on the work of Josie Misko of the Australian National Centre for Vocational Education Research, entitled *Country background report: Addressing the training and assessment needs of adults with low basic skills in Australia* completed in 2006.

According to Misko, in 1996 approximately six million or almost 33% of Australia’s population of approximately 18.2 million (at the time) did not have language, literacy and numeracy skills that were adequate to function fully in the work place, and that adults so affected were over represented among:

- Unemployed Australians, especially the long-term unemployed;
- Adults from non-English speaking backgrounds;
- Indigenous Australians, and
- Prison populations (over-represented by indigenous Australian males).⁹⁵

Misko notes “In the ensuing years, there appears to have been a “strong response” toward addressing the problem. The responsibility for the delivery of Foundational learning type programs is held by both

⁹⁴ Ibid. Accessed on August 29, 2012.

⁹⁵ Misko, Josie, National Centre for Vocational Education Research,
Country background report: Addressing the training and assessment needs of adults with low basic skills in Australia

national and state governments.” Misko provides a fairly comprehensive listing of significant initiatives in place as of 2006, on pages 13 to 16.⁹⁶

Due to the resources available for this project, we focus on the following three national level initiatives:

- The Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP);
- Workplace English Language and Literacy Program (WELL); and
- Skills Connect.

1. The Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP)

Note: Parts of the discussion describing the program have been summarized from the program’s web site.⁹⁷

Overview

Currently funded by the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education, but administered by the states and territories, the program has been in existence since 2002 (since amalgamation with the Advanced English for Migrants Program). Over the next three financial years (2013-16), the program will receive approximately \$AU 445 million to assist 87,000 eligible job seekers. The program seeks to improve participants’ language, literacy and/or numeracy, with the expectation that such improvements will enable them to participate more effectively in training or in the labour force and lead to greater gains for them and society in the longer term.

The LLNP provides up to 800 hours of free accredited Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) training for eligible individuals whose LLN skills are below the level considered necessary to secure sustainable employment or pursue further education and training. Eligible job seekers (aged 15 to 64) are referred to a LLNP provider by Referring Agencies, which currently include: Centrelink (a portal to Australian government services); Job Services Australia (JSA) providers; and Disability Employment Service (DES) providers.

The program targets job seekers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds as well as a disadvantaged job seeker groups (including Indigenous people, young males, people with disabilities, isolated female job seekers and/or cases of aged based workforce exclusion) and provides flexible training to eligible clients and caters for the increasing demand for English language training as well as the continuing need for literacy and numeracy training and vocationally-oriented training. Clients are placed in the appropriate stream of training with the appropriate training focus following a face-to-face or distance-mode pre-training assessment of language, literacy and numeracy competencies.

Each assessed and recommended participant has an individual training plan. This outlines the tailored training a participant is to receive to meet his or her needs, and forms the basis for recording the participant’s progression through training. Participant learning outcomes are reported against the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF)⁹⁸, which provides a consistent approach to the identification of core skills requirements in diverse personal, community, work and training contexts and is a common reference point for describing performance in the five core skills areas, namely speaking, reading, writing, numeracy and learning strategies.

⁹⁶ Ibid pp13 to 16

⁹⁷ Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Skills/Programs/LitandNum/LLNP/Pages/default.aspx>, accessed Aug 12, 2012

⁹⁸ Australian Core Skills Framework

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Skills/Programs/LitandNum/ACSF/Pages/default.aspx> Accessed on August 12, 2012

Training delivered under the Program may be vocationally contextualized within each stream. In addition, delivery of advanced vocationally-oriented course (AVOC) training must meet vocationally specific requirements. Where such training occurs, providers contextualize training or use vocational competencies that meet the needs of local businesses and/or industry.

Throughout Australia, registered training organizations have been contracted to deliver assessment and training services under the LLNP. These include community organizations, Technical and Further Education Institutes (TAFEs), private providers, and universities.

Types of Training

The Program provides initial, basic and advanced accredited English language training, as well as basic and advanced literacy and numeracy training. **Complementary Training (CT)** supports the most disadvantaged participants to achieve their learning outcomes in an environment which they find conducive to learning. An example of such a course may be where a number of mature aged participants are preparing to return to the workforce and a course is developed to be relevant to their circumstances. CT allows service providers the flexibility to develop innovative training courses that are parallel to the core delivery of the Initial, Basic and Advanced streams of training.

Advanced Vocationally-Oriented Courses (AVOC) assists the more advanced participants to participate in vocational training and can include elements of workplace experience and observation. This training is delivered using vocational competencies from endorsed training packages and/or accredited curricula which meet local business and industry needs. The duration of these courses may extend up to 450 hours. Upon satisfactory completion participants may receive a recognized qualification.

Small Group Training (SGT) allows those participants who are uncomfortable or struggling in a larger class to build their confidence in a class of no more than five individuals, before returning to larger classes.

Participants attend training on a part-time (minimum of 10 hours and maximum of 19 hours a week) or a full-time basis (20 hours per week). Training is delivered in blocks of 200 hours (or up to 450 hours for AVOC).

Service Providers

Providers are contracted to deliver either training or assessment. Current face-to-face services are available from 40 training and assessment providers at over 300 sites around Australia. These also include community organizations, TAFEs, private providers, and universities. LLNP services are also available by distance education, across Australia. Providers conduct on-site and off-site verification visits and deliver professional development and moderation workshops nationally.

Quality Management

The Program is structured to provide flexibility in delivery, while achieving clear, measurable outcomes and measurable improvement in participant LLN competencies. It is supported by a performance management and quality assurance framework, namely:

- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be met by providers which relate to participation; retention; attainment and quality;
- Quality Assurance undertaken by Independent Verifiers (IVs). The IV Provider's role includes:
 - Conducting on-site and off-site verification of participant portfolios and claimed outcomes;
 - Providing professional development to trainers through moderation workshops and the provision of constructive feedback to trainers following participant portfolios verification; and

- Providing advice to trainers on the development of assessment tasks and other resources;
- Reporting participant learning outcomes against the ACSF;
- An IT system which confirms participant LLN skills and improvements, participant individual training plans, participant status and attendance; and
- A network of State Office staff who undertake site monitoring visits to ensure that, among other things, appropriate records management protocols are being followed and suitable accommodation and resources are available to participants.

Changes under Consideration

Going into the 2013-2016 planning cycle, feedback is sought on a number of changes are being considered.⁹⁹ Those considered of interest to Clearinghouse colleges and Northern Alberta stakeholders are as summarized below.

- A move to a “multi-provider” or “panel” service delivery model for areas will create greater flexibility to respond to fluctuations in demand. Under the old model of one service provider per area, there were times when capacity was depleted or gaps resulted. A timely response was often difficult due to the need to undertake a separate procurement exercise in order to fill that gap. Under a panel model, one or more providers would be contracted to deliver training in each service area, as is current practice in some service areas. Panels may also be established to offer distance-mode delivery and Independent Verification (IV) services or to replace poor performing service providers.
- The Government seeks to up-skill and to expand the LLN training workforce in order to enhance the quality and supply of LLN training. The existing LLN workforce is currently experiencing a shortage of qualified practitioners and faces significant losses in the next 5-10 years due to retirement. This is particularly problematic given the number of Australian adults with low LLN skills needing assistance. One of the most significant challenges in implementing wide-ranging strategies to address literacy and numeracy issues is the availability of high quality, well-trained adult LLN practitioners who can operate effectively in a diverse range of environments to support a diverse clientele.
- In terms of content and method of delivery, specific and separate Complementary Training (CT) and Advanced Vocationally Oriented Courses (AVOC) may be removed from the LLNP as there is now an element of redundancy as both are now partially integrated as part of the program and the work experience component would be made more flexible by reducing the current direct involvement of government staff. Wholesale changes are under consideration in order to make the program more accessible and responsive to the needs of individuals in remote locations. This may entail modifications to payments and amounts, use of technology and greater involvement of community stakeholders as well as more flexibility in the delivery of programs (such as distance education) rather than in-person, face to face methods. Finally, contractors may be required to prepare indigenous service delivery “action plans” in an attempt to close the skills gaps with these peoples.

Other changes may include:

- The pre-training assessment period may be lengthened to allow assessors to have a better understanding of the needs of clients. If needs are better met, program outcomes should be better and the factors to determine if a candidate is suitable for training may be reconsidered;

⁹⁹ Creating a More Flexible LLNP in 2013-2016, A Discussion Paper to Seek Feedback on the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP)
http://www.deewr.gov.au/Skills/Programs/LitandNum/LLNP/Documents/LLNP_Discussion2013_16.pdf

- Review the Key Performance indicators (KPIs) to take account that some client groups requiring more effort by service providers may not be as successful and payment of “bonuses” to the amounts paid to service providers for “difficult clients/participants (such as some indigenous peoples and youth) to encourage attainment of targets or specific outcomes; and
- A change to the name of the program to the *Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) program* is being considered to decrease the stigma of associated with language, literacy and numeracy programs.

Commentary

With Alberta moving toward a Results Based budgeting (RBB) approach in the near future, one of the more interesting and relevant aspects of the discussion has pertained to use of standards and the use of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for monitoring, evaluation and, in some instances, allocation of training contracts. Such aspects of the Australian “model” may be worthy of more detailed examination.

2. Workplace English Language and Literacy Program (WELL)

Note: Parts of the discussion describing the program have been summarized from the program’s web site.¹⁰⁰

Delivered via the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, the main aim of the WELL Program is to assist organizations to train workers in English language, literacy and numeracy skills. This funding is available on a competitive grants basis and is designed to help workers meet their current and future employment and training needs.

Funding, via “rounds” is available for three types of projects – “training”, “resource” and “strategic”.

Training Projects

Funding for WELL training projects is available for organizations that have demonstrated a need for language, literacy and numeracy in the workplace. Projects should target workers who need to improve their language, literacy and numeracy skills in order to remain or progress in employment (including avoiding displacement) and address participants’ employment and training needs.

The following groups may apply for WELL Training grants:

- Enterprises (including Government Business Enterprises);
- Representative Bodies (Industry Training Advisory Bodies, employer organizations and trade unions);
- Local Governments;
- Group Training Organizations (GTOs); and
- Registered Training Organizations (RTOs).

The organization applying for the funding grant should be prepared to co-ordinate project activities and to use approved training providers, as set out in the guidelines. Eligible activities include English language, literacy and numeracy training integrated with workplace training. Employers are expected to contribute at least 25% of training costs (50% for second and third year projects) and provide regular reports.

¹⁰⁰ Workplace English Language and Literacy Program
<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Skills/Programs/LitandNum/WorkplaceEnglishLanguageandLiteracy/Pages/default.aspx>,
Accessed August 12, 2012

Resource Projects

WELL funding is available for the development of resources including:

- Training materials designed to enhance language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills that are aligned with nationally endorsed Training Packages;
- Industry relevant LLN assessment and reporting methods; and
- LLN professional development resources for industry trainers and assessors aligned with nationally endorsed Training Packages.

Strategic Projects

WELL funding is available for the development of projects that have national scope and involve activities to support ongoing and cost effective workplace English LLN training. Priority areas include:

- Development of a national LLN plan for a particular industry;
- Implementation of strategies to encourage/support workplace LLN training across a whole industry sector; and
- Development and training of nationally applicable models and strategies to integrate LLN in workplace training consistent with the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF), preferably with a cross-industry focus.

Commentary

The cost-shared WELL model, possibly in conjunction with other models or approaches discussed in this Chapter, may serve as a basis for encouraging greater private sector involvement in Northern Alberta.

3. Skills Connect

Note: Parts of the discussion describing the program have been summarized from the program's web site.¹⁰¹

Australian Government *Skills Connect* is a new service designed to help link eligible Australian enterprises with a range of skills and workforce development programs and funding. It brings together funding from six different training and workforce development programs to better target industry and worker training. Australian Government Skills Connect will allow employers to address their overall workforce development needs, and the Workplace English Language and Literacy program can be accessed via this new service. The major components of the program are discussed briefly below.

National Workforce Development Fund

Under the Fund, organizations can identify their current and future business and workforce development needs and apply for Government funding to support the training of existing workers and new workers in the area of need. If eligible, the Fund will help to increase the capacity of the workforce by providing existing workers and new workers with the opportunity to enhance their skill levels through formal training. It will also help increase the supply of labour and skills in sectors and occupations where there is a current or emerging skills need. Large enterprises will contribute 66 per cent of the cost of training, medium enterprises 50 per cent, and small enterprises 33 per cent. \$AU 148 million is available for 2011-12.

Workplace English Language and Literacy Program

The Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) Program is designed to help organizations to train workers in reading, writing and maths skills. It also helps Indigenous Employment Program (IEP) participants who need reading, writing and math training.

¹⁰¹ Skills Connect Program <http://www.skills.gov.au/SkillsConnect>, Accessed on August 13, 2012

WELL funding is available for employers, partnering with a training organization, to provide reading, writing and maths training linked to job-related workplace training. The workplace training undertaken is specifically tailored to the workforce development needs of the employer and the learning needs of the workers. The workplace training is usually made up of several units of competency taken from a nationally recognized training package.

Funding is available on a competitive grants basis. Employers are expected to contribute at least 25 per cent of the total cost of the training. This contribution rises to 50 per cent for employers that choose to deliver WELL training for a second or third year. Budget data for 2011-12 is not available.

Accelerated Australian Apprenticeships Initiative

Led by industry, the Accelerated Australian Apprenticeships initiative will support Australian apprentices to progress through their training as they demonstrate the required competencies, rather than on a time served basis, helping business and industry to get the qualified trades people needed as soon as possible.

It is anticipated that Industry Skills Councils and peak industry bodies will lead projects, working in partnership with enterprises, training organizations and other stakeholders.

In 2011/12, approximately \$AU 30 million in “one-off grants” is available through Australian Government Skills Connect to fund projects under the initiative.

Experience+ Training

Experience+ Training supports employers to enable their mature age workers to pass on their valuable skills and experience to new workers. It helps provide quality training to up-skill mature age workers (aged 50 years or over) so that they can gain the skills needed to successfully mentor and supervise apprentices or trainees in the workplace.

Experience+ Training is available to:

- Employers who employ a mature age worker (50 years or over) for at least 15 hours per week and who employ at least one registered apprentice or trainee who works at the same location/site as the mature age worker; or
- Small business owners who employ registered Australian apprentices and who are themselves mature age workers.

Experience+ Training grants are paid in two instalments – a start up payment of \$AU 3,500 including GST and a completion payment of \$AU 1,450 including GST.

Experience+ More Help for Mature Age Workers

Experience+ More Help for Mature Age Workers is available to:

- Employers who employ a mature age worker aged 50 years and over and who work in industries where there is a high proportion of trade occupations, which range from technicians, machinery operators, drivers, labourers, kitchen hands, garden and nursery workers.
- Employers from other industries who employ workers with trades and related relevant skills for example:
 - Aged Care – drivers who transport elderly clients.
 - Arts – audiovisual technician, jeweller and musical instrument maker.
 - Textile and Design – saddler and canvass and leather goods.
 - Retail – florist, glass craftsman or interior decorator.
 - Childcare – kitchen hands or chefs preparing food for children.
 - Small business owners in relevant occupations and who are themselves mature age workers.

The Experience⁺ More Help for Mature Age Workers grants are paid in two instalments:

- Reimbursement of \$AU 2200 including GST for costs associated with a Skills Assessment. A Registered Training Organization must undertake the Skills Assessment which can result in either a statement of attainment or a Certificate III to Advanced Diploma level qualification; or an approved Training Package Skills Set for workers with a Certificate III or above qualification already); and
- Reimbursement of a further \$AU 2200 including GST for additional gap training as identified in the Skills Assessment to deliver the target qualification, if required.

Commentary

Given demographic projections for Northern Alberta and other work completed for the Clearinghouse Colleges which suggest that a vacuum of supervisory capable workers may be emerging due to retirements and other demographic trends¹⁰² and other concerns cited about the “softer skills of some apprentices¹⁰³”, a program that provides such assistance may be worthy of further study for Northern Alberta.

B. New Zealand

As of July 2011, New Zealand had a population of approximately 4.3 million. While relatively small in size, approximately 14% of the population is rural. Furthermore, the Indigenous population is approximately 12.0% of the total including 7.4% “Maori” and 4.6% “Pacific Islanders”.¹⁰⁴

In 2006, New Zealand participated in the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALL), an international study in thirteen countries measuring specific literacy and numeracy skills of the population aged 16 to 65. The data showed that the literacy rate in New Zealand is high and has been improving since 1996. However, there were also an estimated 1.1 million people with literacy at levels 1 or 2 who did not have the required skills.¹⁰⁵ Since 2008, the Government of New Zealand has invested more than \$NZ 121 million in a range of literacy and numeracy initiatives. In 2010 there were 36,200 adult literacy and numeracy learners; in 2011 there were 93,201; and in 2012 there is an estimated 122,736. From 2010 to 2012, around 250,000 adult learners will have received support in developing their literacy and numeracy skills, through a range of government-funded provision.¹⁰⁶

Policies and Future Developments

The Tertiary Education Commission has released the “*Getting Results in Literacy and Numeracy*” paper which provides an update of what has been achieved to date and outlines the next steps for the tertiary education sector.

Accordingly, the future will see a focus on:

¹⁰² Steven Lakey, Research to Evaluate the Shortage of Skilled Workers in Northern Alberta, Northern Alberta Development Council, March 2006. P87

¹⁰³ Essential Skills for Piping Project: Summary of Research, Piping Industry College of B.C.
[http://esp.uapicbc.ca/sites/default/files/pdf/Research%20Report%20Patridge%20\(3\)_0.pdf](http://esp.uapicbc.ca/sites/default/files/pdf/Research%20Report%20Patridge%20(3)_0.pdf)

¹⁰⁴ Index Mundi, New Zealand Demographics Profile 2012
http://www.indexmundi.com/new_zealand/demographics_profile.html. Accessed on August 12, 2012.

¹⁰⁵ New Zealand Department of Education, The Development and State of the Art of Adult Learning and Education, National Report of New Zealand, August 2008. p 11
http://www.unesco.org/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/INSTITUTES/UII/confintea/pdf/National_Reports/Asia%20-%20Pacific/New_Zealand.pdf

¹⁰⁶ Speech by Hon Steven Joyce to National Centre for Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Symposium, June 28, 2012.

- Increasing the number of learners who access literacy and numeracy in their courses;
- Continuous improvement to achieve improved learner results with Māori and Pasifika learners as priority groups;
- Expanding the skilled literacy and numeracy teaching workforce;
- Building the research and knowledge base;
- Encouraging employers and other agencies to include literacy and numeracy in their training systems; and
- Increased use of new technology in the development of literacy and numeracy resources, such as online learning systems and assessment.

Other key excerpts from a speech made on June 28, 2012 by Steven Joyce, Minister of Education at the National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults Symposium¹⁰⁷ are summarized below:

- Particular emphasis has been placed on 25 – 34 year olds as they will naturally benefit for the longest time from an increase in their skill levels.
- \$NZ 115 million has been dedicated in 2013 to Foundational level education.
- In the future, only full qualifications (40 credit or more) courses with embedded literacy and numeracy will be funded.
- Around one third of the Foundational level fund will be administered via an expression of interest and proposal process by the TEC that will look to allocate funds to those providers that have proven performance in meeting the needs of Foundational learners.
- Private training establishments (PTEs) are to be eligible to compete for levels 1 and 2 funding alongside other providers.
- The government will aim to make foundational-level education fees free by having all levels 1 and 2 fees paid from the Student Achievement Component (the government's budgetary contribution to direct costs of teaching and learning) by 2017.
- There will be review of the costs of service provision to ensure that the government is getting good value for money.
- The government will make Levels 1 and 2 provision focused on people of all ages who do not already have a level 2 qualification. Providers will be asked to manage a transitional regime to shift most enrolments in levels 1 and 2 qualifications to those who do not already have a level 2 qualification over the next three to four years.

The Key Players

The current and going forward key players in the provision of basic literacy and numeracy/foundational learning skills programs within the Government of New Zealand, as summarized from the Literacy and Numeracy for Adults web site,¹⁰⁸ are discussed briefly below.

1. Government of New Zealand

Government Agencies and Departments and their roles and responsibilities are summarized in the following table.

¹⁰⁷ Speech of Hon. Steven Joyce. <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/speech-national-centre-literacy-and-numeracy-adults-symposium>

¹⁰⁸ New Zealand National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults <http://literacyandnumeracyforadults.com/New-Zealand-Overview/Government-agencies>. Accessed August 14, 2012

Key New Zealand Government Skills Players

Agencies	Roles/Responsibilities/Comments
Tertiary Education Commission (<i>Te Amorangi Matauranga Matua</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall policy development and implementation • Provision of government's funding provision to ensure a well performing network with quality outcomes • Raising workforce essential skills through development of common goals and objectives, teaching and assessment tools and "literacy and numeracy infrastructure"
Department of Labour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How literacy, language and numeracy skills underpin people's participation in work and further skill development • Contribution of increased skill levels to positive workplace outcomes and higher productivity • Currently undertaking the <i>Skills Highway</i> program, which seeks to connect employers with the information and resources to help them improve their employees' literacy and numeracy skills • Coordinating and interpreting/evaluating related research
Ministry of Social Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Striving to create an inclusive New Zealand where all people are able to participate in the social and economic life of their communities • Overcoming barriers to employment and full participation • Strong focus on adult and youth skills initiatives to ensure employment
Ministry of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advises the Government on policy and strategy for tertiary education • Undertakes monitoring, analysis and research into tertiary education to inform policy and provide information to the public including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The literacy and numeracy skills that learners gain from programs ○ The educational and employment outcomes they achieve subsequently ○ The cost effectiveness of different approaches for various
Department of Corrections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand literacy and numeracy programs so that prisoners have better literacy and numeracy skills on release • An increased focus on addressing the literacy and numeracy needs of short-serving and remand prisoners
Te Puni Kōkiri (<i>"A group moving forward together"</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principal advisor on Crown-Maori relations • As the Maori proportion of New Zealand's population gradually increases, raising the skill level of this segment will be very important • Activities also include Maori literacy programs; and workplace learning via cadetships
Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The median age of Pacific peoples in 2006 was 21.1 years – considerably lower than the median age of the New Zealand population overall at 35.9 years • Current educational and up skilling strategies have had limited success with respect to Pacific communities, and a prime objective of the Ministry's mandate will be to help to overcome the problems
New Zealand Qualifications Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of: National Qualifications in Adult Literacy and Numeracy Education; unit standards in Adult Literacy and Numeracy Education at levels 4-6 of the New Zealand Qualifications Framework (NZQF); and a suite of literacy and numeracy unit standards at level 1 of the NZQF.

2. The National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults

The Centre, established in 2009 through a contract with the Tertiary Education Commission and hosted by the University of Waikato, focuses on literacy and numeracy for adults as a large-scale issue of national strategic importance. It facilitates collaborations with key stakeholders nationally and internationally and works in partnership with Māori institutions like Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangī, to bring together specialist skills in Māori pedagogy with literacy and numeracy expertise.

The Centre's strategic goals are to provide and support:

- High quality professional learning opportunities to develop the capacity of organizations, educators and managers;
- Internationally referenced and locally relevant qualifications;
- A relevant research program;
- Policy advice to agencies nationally and internationally;
- High quality learning resources; and
- Strong partnerships.

The roles and responsibilities of key partners are summarized in the following table.

Key Partners of the National Centre of Literacy and Numeracy for Adults

Partner	Roles/Responsibilities
Business New Zealand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largest business advocacy organization and through its four founding member organizations – EMA Northern, EMA Central, Canterbury Employers’ Chamber of Commerce and the Otago-Southland Employers’ Association – 70 affiliated trade and industry associations – and the Major Companies Group, represents the views of over 76,000 employers and businesses
Council of Trade Unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An active participant in programs to increase language, reading and numeracy skills • Runs the Learning Representatives program, which trains and supports workplace leaders to help their co-workers into learning programs
Industry Training Federation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A membership-based organization that represents all Industry Training Organizations (ITOs) • Main focus is to embed or integrate literacy and numeracy into industry training
Ako Aotearoa ^a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ako Aotearoa is New Zealand's National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence • Focuses on enhancing the effectiveness of tertiary teaching and learning practices

^a. The use of the Māori word ‘Ako’ reflects the view that teaching and learning are two interactive parts of the whole education experience. Learning should be active and learners have responsibilities as well as rights. Teachers modify and improve their practice by interacting with active learners.

Commentary

The New Zealand summary reinforces the need for a range of organizations to be working effectively to address foundational learning needs and provides insights with regard to creation of “umbrella” organizations to address the problem and other approaches to dealing with rapidly growing groups (“Pacific Islanders”) that are currently performing “below average”.

C. England

Much of our effort for England was expended on exploring the new “Foundation Learning” Program.

1. Foundation Learning

Under the Department for Education and the Education Funding Agency, Foundation Learning is a national program of learning for learners aged 14-19 (and up to age 25 for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities) working predominantly at entry level or level 1.

The program arose out of the recommendations of the Leitch Report (calling for a significant increase in the number of people with a skill level of 2 or the minimum to pursue subsequent training, such as an apprenticeship or higher) and the government’s commitment to becoming a world leader in skills by 2020. Other key aspects of the “Leitch” recommendations included:

- Raising the skills levels of adults inside and outside of the work force;
- Creating a demand led system that responds to the needs of employers, learners, and society;
- Equipping young people with the skills they need for life and work; and
- Creating a more flexible, innovative and inclusive qualifications system.¹⁰⁹

In 2008-09, out of about three million learners in the 14 to 19 age group, approximately 500,000 to 800,000 were expected to be suitable for Foundation Learning including those in mainstream work-based programs, those with learning difficulties or disabilities, special needs, and young offenders.¹¹⁰

The “delivery system” consists of the over 150 Local Authorities who are responsible for education in their areas and now hundreds of service providers who are contracted to offer programs. The service providers can cover a wide array of organizations including private education companies, unions and sector councils, as well as schools and “community” colleges.

Programs vary in length and content, according to individuals’ needs, but all include “bite-sized” vocational subject matter, functional skills, and personal and social development.

While there is no “bottom”, the ultimate destinations are summarized in the following table.¹¹¹

Destinations of UK Foundation Learning Students

“Young People”	“Adults”	“Those with Special Needs”
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GCSE/A level (high school graduation or senior matriculation) • Diplomas • Apprenticeship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full level 2 • Sustainable employment with accredited training • Train to Gain (level 1 or 2) • Apprenticeship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported employment • Independent Living

There is flexibility between the four routes ensuring that young people can move between them as they progress. Also, legislated changes to the participation ages (17 for 2013 and 18 for 2015) will place a responsibility on service providers to ensure that the programs and opportunities are appropriate.

Fees for Students

There is a wide range of fees charged to students depending on the service provider, course/program and length of study. For example a one-year, full-time horticulture related course at Warwickshire College has student fees of £1,540 (or about \$2,500) per year.¹¹² Courses tend to be free in many instances for those under 19.

¹⁰⁹ Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills

[http://www.delni.gov.uk/leitch_finalreport051206\[1\]-2.pdf](http://www.delni.gov.uk/leitch_finalreport051206[1]-2.pdf). Accessed August 23, 2012

¹¹⁰ Foundational Learning champions’ training programme, slide 4, Accessed August 24, 2012

<http://repository.excellencegateway.org.uk/fedora/objects/import-pdf:1327/datastreams/PDF/content>

¹¹¹ Foundational Learning Tier: Interim Guidance - Draft working version for 2009/10: May 2009, page 8.

¹¹² Warwickshire College, Arboriculture, Foundation Learning. Accessed on August 23, 2012.

http://www.hotcourses.com/uk-courses/Arboriculture-Foundational-Learning-courses/page_pls_user_course_details/16180339/0/w/53423730/page.htm#stdrw

Funding to Service Providers

To determine the funding to be provided for each learner, the following calculation is performed:

Standard Learner Number(SLN)	The SLN value is a measure of the amount of activity associated with a qualification or a learning aim. Each qualification/learning aim has an SLN value that reflects the size of the learning aim, irrespective of its duration. The maximum that a learner can be funded for is 1.75 SLN in any academic year.
X	
National Funding Rate	Funding rates are standard rates set by the Young Peoples' Learning Agency (YPLA) each year and are non-negotiable. The funding rate per SLN for 16–18 year olds is £2,920 for the 2010/11 year.
X	
Provider Factor	Each provider is assigned its own unique provider factor by the YPLA, which accounts for the unique circumstances of the “service offering” such as area costs, modifiers for duration, type of student, previous track record and student resident costs, in some instances
+	
Additional Learning Supports	Designed to benefit learners with a range of needs including those who are disengaged or lack motivation, those who face barriers to their learning through their personal circumstances such as homelessness or drug or alcohol addiction, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities as well as those who require additional support in English and mathematics.
=	
Funding Allocation per Learner	

Source (<http://www.sctp.org.uk/documents/GuidetoFLFunding.pdf>)

However, it should be kept in mind that the funding methodology for Foundation Learning is extremely complex with each of the preceding factors that “modify” the national funding rate being potentially subject to a number of conditions.

Discussion of the New Qualifications Framework

Closely associated with the Foundational Learning reforms has been the introduction of a qualifications system. The new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) is for recognizing and accrediting qualifications in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. It aims to make the system easier to understand, more inclusive, accessible and responsive to the needs of learners and employers.

The following table provides a summary of the new QCF compared to the old National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Comparison of Qualifications Frameworks

Level	Examples of NQF qualifications	Examples of QCF qualifications
Entry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Entry level certificates - English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) - Skills for Life - Functional Skills at entry level (English, maths and ICT) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awards, Certificates, and Diplomas at entry level - Foundational Learning at entry level - Functional Skills at entry level
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GCSEs grades D-G - BTEC Introductory Diplomas and Certificates - OCR Nationals - Key Skills at level 1 - Skills for Life - Functional Skills at level 1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BTEC Awards, Certificates, and Diplomas at level 1 - Functional Skills at level 1 - Foundational Learning Tier pathways - NVQs at level 1
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GCSEs grades A*-C - Key Skills level 2 - Skills for Life - Functional Skills at level 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BTEC Awards, Certificates, and Diplomas at level 2 - Functional Skills at level 2 - OCR Nationals - NVQs at level 2
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A levels - GCE in applied subjects - International Baccalaureate - Key Skills level 3 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BTEC Awards, Certificates, and Diplomas at level 3 - BTEC Nationals - OCR Nationals - NVQs at level 3
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Certificates of Higher Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BTEC Professional Diplomas Certificates and Awards - HNCs - NVQs at level 4
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HNCs and HNDs - Other higher diplomas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - HNDs - BTEC Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Diploma in Professional Production Skills - BTEC Advanced Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BTEC Advanced Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diploma in Translation - BTEC Advanced Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BTEC Advanced Professional Diplomas, Certificates and Awards - NVQs at level 5 (in the QCF framework)
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specialist awards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Award, Certificate and Diploma in strategic direction

Source: http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/QualificationsExplained/DG_10039017

The main differences between QCF and NQF include:

- Unit based learning outcomes and assessment criteria;
- Credit can be “banked” or used in alternative ways;
- Greater flexibility in the combination of units at different levels; and
- The modular infrastructure makes it easier to generate and compare a “standardized” student record via “Unique Learner number”.

The main benefits for learners and providers are summarized in the following table.

Main Benefits to Learners and Providers

Learners	Providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More freedom choice and flexibility via smaller steps• Easy access to information facilitates better planning about the commitment and coordination of personal life• Flexible and self-paced	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitates greater flexibility in design and delivery• Helps to improve retention (smaller steps are less intimidating)• Progression is easily to monitor• Standardized content is easy to understand and compare.

Types of Credentials

There are three “credentials” within a program of study, according to the number of credits (with one credit equal to 10 hours of learning time):

- Award – 12 credits or less;
- Certificate – 13 to 36 credits; and
- Diploma – more than 37 credits.

In addition, there are nine levels of increasing difficulty (“Entry” through “8”). For example, “Level 3” would equate to “A Level” or senior matriculation and “Level 8 would equate to a Ph. D.

Commentary

The U.K. Foundation Learning system is very similar to the “Integrated Model” for which a larger unmet need exists in Alberta, according to some stakeholders consulted. The data from this discussion shows how base support rates might be modified according to a range of factors that affect costs such as geographic location and student/program needs. Finally, the model is based on a credential system that is standardized and recognized by all stakeholders and facilitates a “building block” approach. A more formalized “building block” approach in Alberta may be helpful for some learners who have apprehension about entering longer programs. It may also help to better understand the routes or pathways to higher credentials and help to harness the efforts of industry because of greater standardization and credential portability.

D. Norway

Norway has a population of approximately 4.5 million. According to a bulletin of the United Nations, Scientific and Cultural Organization, “Norway has also taken part in two large international surveys concerning basic skills in the adult population: the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and the Adult Literacy and Life Skill Survey (ALL). Although Norway had a high score compared to other countries, there are still a large number of adults whose basic skills need to be addressed. Depending on how the statistics are interpreted, at least 400,000 adults (aged 16 – 65) score below the level in reading and numeracy that is considered a minimum to function in a satisfactory way in working life and social life.”¹¹³

¹¹³ United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001811/181107e.pdf>

Major Players

In Norway, the major players associated with Adult Basic Education are:

- Adult Education Associations; and
- Vox – the Norwegian Institute for Adult Education.

A brief overview of each is presented below.

Adult Education Associations

An adult education association is a voluntary, “ideal” organization with adult education as its main concern, and consists of two or more member organizations. The approximately 20 adult education associations receiving state grants have about 400 member organizations. The courses include a number of different topics varying from leisure activities to courses at university and university college level and courses leading to vocational qualifications. The Norwegian Association for Adult Learning is a national umbrella organization for the adult education associations in Norway. During recent years there have been about 600 000 participants in the different courses organised by the adult education associations, Today there are 19 adult learning associations, representing 435 nationwide adult learning NGOs offering 47,000 courses with 633,000 participants. Of these 55 % are women.¹¹⁴

Vox – the Norwegian Institute of Adult Education

Vox is an agency under the Ministry of Education and Research that works to promote participation in community and working life by improving the competence level of adults. Vox develops, analyses and disseminates knowledge about adult learning. Vox is especially concerned with improving adults’ basic skills, adults’ right to primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education and training, and formal, non-formal and informal qualifications. Vox administers grants for educational organizations and distance education institutions, and awards funds for educational development in these organizations. Vox is also responsible for the subject curriculum in Norwegian and social sciences for adult immigrants, and collaborates with other agencies on initial education for immigrants.¹¹⁵

Policy and Strategy Development¹¹⁶

Norway’s “modern era” strategy for addressing low levels of essential skills can be traced to the Competence Reform changes to the Education Act. This reform was launched in 1999 in an attempt to improve workplace skills and to promote lifelong learning. In providing resources for public and private companies to participate in about 700 competence building projects, it gave all adults in need a statutory right to primary and lower secondary education (from 2002), and those who were born before 1978 were given the right to upper secondary education and training if they have not completed this kind of education earlier. The education and training is to be “minimized” on the basis of the individual’s formal, non-formal and informal qualifications, and be adapted to the individual’s needs.

Guidelines concerning adult education were presented by the Ministry of Education and Research in 1999, to ensure that the inclusive education principles and content of L97 and L97S were implemented in adult education at primary and lower secondary level. To meet the needs of adults with poor literacy skills, the guidelines emphasize the importance of mapping the skills of individual learners in order to provide education that is suited to their needs. The guidelines emphasize the importance of motivation-

¹¹⁴ Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, Background Report Norway, Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2006, 10 <http://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/40015741.pdf>

¹¹⁵ Vox web site <http://www.vox.no/no/global-meny/English/About-Vox/>. Accessed on August 23, 2012.

¹¹⁶ Background Report Norway, Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2006 <http://www.oecd.org/edu/ceri/40015741.pdf> pages 11-13

enhancing positive feedback, based on a sense of mastery, for example assessment by the use of portfolios, open ended tasks and a holistic approach.

The Program for Basic Competence in Working Life (BKA)

Note: The following summary and discussion has been developed from the web site for the program.¹¹⁷

Based upon some of the Competence Reform experiences, The *Program for Basic Competence in Working Life (BKA)* was initiated in 2006 to strengthen basic skills in reading, writing, numeracy and ICT among adult employees and job applicants, to reduce attrition from the labour market and to increase participation rates in education and training programs. Basic competence is a comprehensive term that includes various fundamental skills. The program deals with reading and writing, numeracy and the use of digital tools. An overview of the program is presented below.

In cooperation with the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration, the objective of the program (with approximately 25,000 participants in 2012) is to give adults the opportunity to acquire the basic skills they need to keep up with the demands and changes in modern working life and civil society. The program is funded from the National Budget, making it financially viable for private and public enterprises to start up basic skills development schemes for their employees and job-seekers. The program has recently been made permanent and is administered by Vox, the national agency for lifelong learning.

The program concentrates on reading, writing, numeracy, and digital skills. Any enterprise in Norway, private and public, can apply for funding from the program. The following criteria have been emphasised:

- The learning activity should be combined with work and basic skills training should preferably be linked to other job-relevant learning.
- The courses should strengthen the participants' motivation to go on learning.
- The courses have to relate to the competence goals expressed in the Framework for Basic Skills developed by Vox and approved by the Ministry of Education and Research.
- Special efforts are made to include SMEs in the program and to encourage applications from industries which employ people with relatively low formal skills.

A database has been established in order to supply up-to-date reports on the progress of the program. The data base also includes detailed information on participants (gender, formal education, industry etc.) and thereby makes it possible to monitor the program and to ascertain whether it reaches the intended target groups. The data base will also make it easier to evaluate the long term impact of the program.

Competence goals, basic skills profiles, tests and educational tools have been developed to assure the quality of provision and to help providers in their task. Vox organizes short courses for teachers of basic skills and we provide grants for teachers who take further education in the teaching of basic skills.

In 2012 Vox received 498 applications. With a total of 105 million NOK, (approximately \$Can 18 million or € 15 million) available Vox was able to support 369 projects. Since a number of applications involved clusters of enterprises, nearly 700 enterprises will benefit from the grant.

A summary of funding activity since 2006 is presented in the following table.

¹¹⁷ The Basic Competence in Working Life Programme. <http://www.vox.no/global-meny/English/Basic-skills/Basic-Competences-in-Working-Life/> Accessed August 20, 2012.

Summary of Funding for the Program for Basic Competence in Working Life

Year	Applications	Granted	€ Amount (Millions)	S Can Equivalent (Millions)
2012	498	369	14.8	18.4
2011	409	249	11.5	14.3
2010	343	204	9.8	12.2
2009	270	162	7	8.7
2008	279	96	3.8	4.7
2007	208	70	2.5	3.1
2006	167	65	1.8	2.2

Evaluation of the program suggests that it has been successful, but that there are reasons to question whether it has managed to reach those with the lowest levels of competence. For a variety of reasons, those with the lowest levels of skills do not appear to have made full use of the program.

Chapter 8 – Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

The major findings, conclusions and recommendations arising out of this study are presented in this Chapter.

I. Findings and Conclusions

The major findings and conclusions are summarized below.

Policies, Goals, Weaknesses and Barriers

- 1. Based upon the socioeconomic composition of the NADC region, according to the 2006 Census data, there are a number of factors that may affect the formation of policy development for the delivery of foundational learning.**

The factors include:

- The proportion of the population that is Aboriginal was approximately 18.4% (and is expected to grow rapidly) compared to approximately 4.5% for the balance Alberta;
- While the unemployment rate overall was similar to that of the balance of Alberta (approximately 5%), the rate in small communities was much higher (approximately 13%);
- Major differences in the composition of the labour force include a higher proportion of individuals in “Mining and oil and gas extraction” (approximately 16.2% compared to approximately 6.0%) and “Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting” (approximately 7.0% compared to 3.6%);
- The education levels of individuals of prime working age (25 to 64) are considerably lower with approximately 23.4% not competing high school with a comparable figure of 14.7% for the balance of Alberta; and
- The percentage of the population who are immigrants is lower than for the balance of Alberta (6.3% compared to 17.3%); however, there is some anecdotal evidence from our discussions (presented later) that this proportion may be rising or in demand of higher levels of service.

- 2. A number of the goals of the Governments of Canada and Alberta, in an increasingly competitive and knowledge-based economy, may support the need and place for increased foundational learning.**

The key goals are recapped below.

Government of Canada

- Increase First Nations and Inuit high school graduation rates by 8% by the 2016-17 fiscal year.
- Increase the number of First Nations and Inuit people who pursue postsecondary education (goal to be set upon review of 2011 Census data).
- Increase the percentage of the Canadian labour force aged 25-64 who have attained a post secondary education credential to 67.9%. (According to the 2006 Census data, the equivalent statistics were 50.2% for Northern Alberta and 59.4% for all of Alberta).
- Increase the percentage (and number) of full-time students aged 18-34 in participating provinces and territories who used a Canada Student loan or a Canada Student Grant or an in-study interest subsidy from 38.5% to 41.6%.
- Increase the percentage of eligible children who have ever received either a Canada Education Savings Grant (from 42.8% in 2010 to 45.6% in 2012) or Canada Learning Bond (from 21.9% in 2010 to 26.0% in 2012).

Government of Alberta

Government-wide Goals from the 2012- 15 Strategic Plan include:

- Increase the percentage of participants employed after leaving income support programs to 70% by 2014-15 from 63% in 2010-11.
- Increase the high school completion rate of students within five years of entering grade 10 from the 79% in 2009-10 to 82% by 2014-15.
- Increase the percentage of students entering post-secondary programs (including apprenticeship) within six years of entering Grade 10 from 59.3% in 2009-10 to 61.0% by 2014-15.
- Increase the high school completion rate for Albertans aged 25-34 and postsecondary education completion rate for Albertans aged 25 to 64 from 90.7% in 2010-11 to 92.0% by 2014-15 and 62.0% in 2010-11 to 64.0% by 2014-15, respectively.
- Reduce the difference in the unemployment rate between on-reserve and off-reserve Aboriginals from 7.6 percentage points to 5.5 percentage points or less by 2014-15.

Goals of the three key Ministries, based on 2012-15 Business Plans, include:

Education

- Increase student performance by 2014-15, according to select indicators, as outlined in the following table.

Select Key Student Performance Goals

Indicator	Overall Student Population	FNMI Student Population
Overall percentage of students who achieved standards on provincial achievement tests in English and French Language Arts and Français3	“Acceptable” from 81.3% to 83.0%	“Acceptable” from 63.9% to 67.7%
Overall percentage of students who achieved standards on diploma examinations.	<i>Language Arts</i>	<i>Language Arts</i>
	• “Acceptable” from 86.1% to 87.9%	• “Acceptable” from 63.2% to 82.6%
Increase high school completion rate of students within five years of entering grade 10	<i>Mathematics</i>	<i>Mathematics</i>
	• “Acceptable” from 78.8% to 81.6%	• “Acceptable” from 69.8% to 75.4%
Reduce annual dropout rate of self-identified FNMI students aged 14-18	From 79% to 82%	From 45% to 49%
Reduce annual dropout rate of self-identified FNMI students aged 14-18	No goal stated	From 10.4% to 9.0%

Human Services

- Increase the percentage of clients reporting they are either employed or in further education or training after leaving a skills training program from 72% to 75% by 2014-15.
- Maintain Alberta’s Number 1 inter-provincial ranking for labour force participation (presently 72.9%) and First Nations, Métis and Inuit off-reserve labour force participation rate (presently 70.6%).

Enterprise and Advanced Education

- Increase the percentage of Albertans age 18-34 participating in post-secondary education from 18% to 19% by 2014-15. (Based upon the population of the NADC region, this would translate to an additional approximately 750 individuals.)
- Increase the percentage of Albertans age 25-64 that have completed post-secondary education from 62% to 64% by 2014-15.

3. Despite the goals that have been set, at present, there appears to be some uncertainty as to the role that the Government of Canada will play in funding foundational learning and the level of funding that may be provided.

One of the largest sources of funding provided by the Government of Canada is via Labour Market Agreements which provide funding to provinces for programs such as those covered under Work Foundations and Training for Work. The Labour Market Agreements are to be reviewed at the conclusion of the 2012-13 fiscal year.

Furthermore, other large sources of funding have been programs such as:

- Skills and Partnership Fund — Aboriginal (SPF);
- Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS);and
- Sector Council Funding.

As a result of a strategic review, funding for Sector Council programs will be terminated in March 2013 and the funding for the SPF and ASETS programs will end in March 2015.

4. In our view, the Government of Canada, driven in part by its fiscal position, will be particularly interested in exploring new and innovative ways of funding educational and training programs that will be more results based, receptive to local needs/demands and with risks, accountability and costs shared by other stakeholders, such as private industry.

Our view in this regard is supported by some of the policies stated in Action Plan 2012 regarding Social Impact Bonds, which are reiterated below.

“Economic Action Plan 2012 announces that the Government will continue to explore social finance instruments as a way to further encourage the development of government community partnerships. Building on these partnerships and the work of the Canadian Task Force on Social Finance, the Government will continue to support the momentum building around social finance initiatives and will explore social finance instruments. For example, social impact bonds hold promise as a tool to further encourage the development of government-community partnerships.”

5. The Service, Retail and Tourism program at Portage College is suspended.

While we are not privy to the reasons for suspension, or the changes to programming being considered, we note that such industries present the greatest opportunity for growth in employment and work experience for foundational learning students. A review of the reasons for suspension and exploration of future roles and objectives may be desirable.

6. Foundational learners in Northern Alberta face a number of barriers (in some cases different from those in larger centres).

The major barriers are summarized below:

- **Educational Planning**– lack of awareness regarding options and costs and prerequisites and poor study skills.
- **Socio-Cultural Barriers** – reluctance to leave “home”, poor mentors or role models, mismatched aspirations, and difficulty “fitting in” with learning styles and institutional culture.
- **Physical Barriers** –there is a higher propensity for individuals with poor foundational skills to be “handicapped” and in general, there is a lack of reliable, regular and affordable transportation.
- **Childcare** – lack of quality, reliable and affordable childcare.
- **System Gaps** – lack of technology supports and continuity between systems, especially when there have been delays.
- **Costs** – not covered by some programs, cut backs in supports for disabled, cumbersome and confusing financial support system, eligibility issues for some on-reserve individuals and limits on amounts otherwise available, and higher than “average” costs for housing, transportation and food.
- **Admission criteria** - lack of recognition of prior learning gained through life and work experiences or small grade point averages or missing prerequisites.

7. While there is a relatively comprehensive program of financial support for foundational learners to address funding barriers (provide by both the Government of Alberta and Canada and the private sector in some instances) based upon our more limited exposure to issues, research and discussions with stakeholders, some of the gaps or weaknesses appear to be:

- **Inequities between the level of funding available to certain on-reserve Aboriginals; and**
- **The possibility of exhausting funding for some individuals on Alberta Government programs.**

A brief summary of our understanding of these weaknesses or issues is provided below:

- Federal funding to on-reserve Aboriginals is provided by the Education of First Nations on Reserves program and is allocated at the discretion of individual First Nations, according to policies that they have developed, which may differ according to specific situations.
- For individuals funded by Government of Alberta programs, such as Training for Work, the maximum eligibility period is normally 30 months. For an individual who might be particularly successful in improving skills (say going from a grade 4 or 5 level to a grade 12 level), there is a strong possibility that the funding period will have expired before studies are completed, and this can act as a disincentive.

8. Another funding weakness may be the level of stability for funding provided, in some instances, for programs undertaken with private stakeholders.

While our “evidence” is based upon relative few discussions with college staff, on a number of occasions, frustration was expressed regarding “gearing up” to provide programs for which funding or participation proved to be short-lived or more limited than expected. The inconsistency places planners in the position of “gambling” and may add to costs or decrease the quality of programming.

Performance of Primary and Secondary Students in Northern Alberta

1. Generally speaking, the academic preparation of many Northern Albertans to succeed in postsecondary studies, compared to Albertans in general, is relatively poor.

A number of indicators are discussed briefly below:

- As reflected by the results of Alberta Education Achievement test results at the Grade 3, 6 and 9 levels, many Northern Albertan students struggle. The most significant weaknesses appear to be in the subjects of Math and Social Studies, subjects for which the results are generally consistently poor and in some School Districts, the percentage of students with “Unacceptable” ratings is as high as 70%. Results for tests of English Language skills were often better in earlier years (Grades 3 and 6) but generally also deteriorated by Grade 9.
- The high school performance of many Northern Albertans reflects more disappointment in a number of respects. While School Districts have worked very hard to address the problems, and are beginning to show signs of success and progress, as reflected by the indicators tracked by Alberta Education, there is still considerable scope for improvement as reflected by the following indicators.
 - a. **High School graduation rates** – While the Provincial Average has ranged from approximately 71% to 74% over the past three years, and a number of Northern Alberta School Districts have comparable or better statistics, there is still approximately one-third of the 22 School Districts where the High School graduation rate is considerably below the provincial average (as low as 13% in some instances).
 - b. **High School drop-out rates** – Province-wide, the high school drop-out rate has been improving in recent years (declining from 4.3% in 2008-09 to 3.2% in 2010-11); however, for some Northern Alberta School Districts, the rates are still as high as 15%.
 - c. **Postsecondary transition rates** – Province-wide, the 6-Year postsecondary transition rates in 2011 were approximately 59% for all students and 31% for First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI) students. Again, while some School Districts, had rates that were better than the Provincial Average (which of itself is of concern, particularly for FNMI students), there were a number where the transition rate was very poor (between 15% and 20%).
 - d. **Grade 12 Diploma Exam participation rates and scores** – Province-wide, the Grade 12 Diploma Exam participation rate in 2011 was only 55% for all Grade 12 students and 19% for FNMI students. With few exceptions, the participation levels in Northern Alberta are below the Provincial Average and as low as 1% in some Northern Alberta School Districts. Province-wide, approximately 83% of writing students received “Acceptable” scores with the comparable rating for FNMI students being approximately 78%. The Northern Alberta results are interesting in that while generally speaking, the results are slightly lower than for the Province as a whole, there are a number of instances where the FNMI results are considerably better than the Provincial Averages.

Future Skills Requirements and Opportunities

1. Our analysis of occupational demand and skills requirements, based upon relatively low skill or educational requirement jobs (NOC “C” and “D”) that may provide the best pathways or ladders to “better” opportunities for some learners may, in the absence of better information, may help to provide some indicators of where effort may be warranted.

The following occupations may have the best “prospects” for learners to obtain employment.

**Occupations for Potential Linkages with Foundational Learning
Programming in Northern Alberta**

Occupational Category	Level	Occupational Category	Level
Heavy Equipment Operators (Except Crane)	C	Food and Beverage Servers	C
Administrative Clerks	C	Bartenders	C
Automotive Mechanical Installers and Servicers	C/D	General Office Clerks	C
Construction Trades Helpers and Labourers	D	Light Duty Cleaners	D
Residential and Commercial Installers and Servicers	C	Janitors, Caretakers and Superintendents	D
Accounting and Related Clerks	C	Payroll Clerks	C
Customer Service Representatives - Financial	C	Receptionists and Switchboard Operators	C
Customer Service, Information and Related Clerks	C	Specialized Cleaners	D
Other Trades Helpers and Labourers	D	Hotel Front Desk Clerks	C

The following tables provide insight as to the context or complexity of how essential skills might be applied for a particular occupation and an indicator of the average degree of difficulty.

Usage and Degree of Difficulty for the Identified Occupations

	Skill Level "C"		Skill Level "D"	
	Skills Utilization	Average Difficulty	Skills Utilization	Average Difficulty
Reading Text	11/20	1.99	11/20	1.84
Document Use	9/22	2.11	12/22	2.06
Writing Skills	8/21	1.50	6/21	1.43
Numeracy: Tasks	4/5	2.07	5/5	2.02
Numeracy: Mathematical Foundations Used	12/20	N/A	12/20	N/A
Oral Communication: Purpose	35/132	N/A	29/132	N/A
Oral Communication: Modes of Communication	3/4	1.82	4/4	1.55
Thinking Skills	1/6	1.85	1/6	1.61
Working with Others	7/12	N/A	8/12	N/A
Computer Use	4/11	1.79	3/11	1.36

The Business Case for Increased Foundational Learning

- In our view, there is a strong business case for increasing investment in foundational learning based upon learning gaps, alignment with policies, goals and initiatives of the Governments of Alberta and Canada , general social and economic benefits, infrastructure capacity available at the Clearinghouse Colleges and the specific cost-benefit of a realistic but hypothetical investment.**

A summary of why we hold this view is outlined below:

- Using the proportion of individuals who hold do not hold high school diplomas as a surrogate of skill level, there is a fairly significant difference or gap between the figure for Northern Alberta (33% of those over 15 years) and the figure for the balance of the province (23% of those over aged 15 years) resulting in a “gap” of approximately 22,000 individuals, of whom more than 52% are Aborigines.
- As Aborigines represent only approximately 4.5% of Albertans and 18.7% of residents within the NADC region, they are over-represented among those with low skills.

- The performance of primary and secondary students in Northern Alberta, as measured by Achievement Test and Grade 12 Diploma Exam results is lower than for the balance of the province, and these results likely play a strong role in deficits or weaknesses later in life.
- Enhancement of skills is key to achievement of many of the goals, objectives and initiatives of the Governments of Alberta and Canada and may be vital to ensure that an adequate work force is in place to meet the needs of the oilsands and oil and gas industries, which may grow significantly over the next 10 years and also be affected by attrition from retirement of existing workers
- Stronger skills have demonstrated and documented benefits in terms of individuals' employability, business productivity and profitability, the ability of individuals and businesses to better exploit and gain from the benefits of "booms", benefits to governments in terms of lower costs for health and social services, and higher tax revenues as a result of higher earnings, as well as other intrinsic benefits such as enhanced citizenship.
- Finally, our cost benefit analysis of expanding the foundational learning capacity of Clearinghouse Colleges by approximately 700 FLE students (representing approximately 50% of surplus capacity through to 2019) with an "investment" of \$9,000 per student and very conservative assumptions as to benefits of completion, cost sharing, earnings and productivity improvement yields a "hard or direct" Return on Investment of approximately 7% to government and 22% to the private sector. For the Government of Alberta, the benefits are likely to be even more significant if other reduced costs are factored in for matters such as health care and social services.

Feedback from Stakeholders

The key "takeaways" from our discussions are summarized below.

- 1. Generally speaking, goals, objectives and targets for programs are not well documented and follow up mechanisms and procedures could be enhanced, and there is a need for longer-term follow-up on a "holistic" basis.**

Addressing these issues will be very important, not only as Government of Alberta moves more toward results based budgeting, but to also "sell" industry and other stakeholders on the need and benefits of investments.

- 2. The key priorities for change in descending order of frequency of mention, with select supporting and context commentary, include:**

- **The need for improve access to social and support services (mental health, guidance counsellors, Aboriginal elders, dealing with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder mentors, coping or life skills programming, and school nurse etc). (5)**

Poor behavioral patterns often entrenched by grade 6-7, especially with Aboriginal students. There is a need for some sort of outreach/intervention/role modelling/mentorship to address and reverse this problem. Life skills programming is required for older Aboriginals in order to "catch up". These issues may also contribute to a reluctance of Aboriginal learners to leave home.

For some students with lower skills, inclusion of programming/training features like obtaining a driver's license and financial/credit card literacy may be helpful. There may also be benefits to attempt to better integrate physical fitness and health in some programming.

Greater “sensitization” to online and video-conferencing approaches may be helpful in this regard, and may be part of the solution to the transportation issue, as discussed below.

Portage College has a particularly welcoming environment for Aboriginal students and other colleges should attempt to emulate some of the features.

- **Changes to content with suggestions for more “softer skills” (increasing GED requirements and adopting some European system practices) and more math, science and physics. (4)**

There is a need to consider integrating some aspects of “European systems” to the foundational learning delivery. A common perception of these individuals was that the current systems were skewed too far toward providing “training” as soon as possible, rather than an “education” and that, as a result, many individuals still lacked the “softer skills” required for future success and adaptability.

Other comments pertained to the shortness of some programs, which did not result in individuals who were as “well-rounded” as desirable.

- **More stable funding to facilitate better long range planning, integration of “soft skills” (for which many employers will not provide funding or endorse training at lower levels) and mitigation of risks associated with program development.(3)**

This was discussed earlier in the context of funding gaps.

- **Improved transportation for learners. (3)**

The geography and demographic factors associated with Northern Alberta exacerbate this problem and costs of providing programming are already high due to other factors such as small class sizes and living costs for students while learning.

More innovative sharing of facilities with other stakeholders may hold some promise along with greater use of online and video-conferencing techniques. However, despite Alberta’s investment in the Supernet, bandwidth is considered to be a problem for some approaches that enhance “reality”, and there is an aversion to learning scenarios that do not include “real instructors”.

- **Extended funding for some upgrading students who only can access funding for 3 years, which means that students below skill level 4 may exhaust funding before they get to college prep and may never advance. (2)**

This was discussed earlier in the context of funding gaps.

- **More reliable outcomes reporting and information sharing. (2)**

At the practitioner level, there is a need to be able to access and share information about best practices, trends, professional development opportunities etc. This might be accomplished simply through a “Sharepoint” site among Clearinghouse members but more elaborate and extensive linkages to other networks may be beneficial as a system evolves.

At the administration and research levels, there could be benefit from a more coordinated approach (even with other service providers and fields) to deal with issues such as research, provision of counselling and First Nations.

Campuses operate too much in isolation; there would be benefits to moving more toward a Campus Alberta approach for foundational learning delivery.

There is also a perceived need for greater emphasis on marketing of programs and outreach/easier contacts/information flow with industry and other levels of government. This effort may be particularly appropriate given the likely need for new and innovative approaches such as social impact bonds and education maintenance allowances. The level of understanding of these concepts was “mixed” from our discussions.

3. There may be a need for more programming effort for immigrants and temporary foreign workers.

Historically, with relatively low proportions of immigrants in Northern Alberta, compared to the balance of the province, these groups have not been given significant attention. However, more recent policies of the Governments of Canada and Alberta have led to higher numbers and, based on our limited discussions with stakeholders, it may be that foundational learning related policies and programming need to be reviewed.

Model Review and Analysis

In conducting our Model Review and Analysis, we have attempted to address the full spectrum of activities associated with the planning and delivery of foundational learning program covering a range of issues associated with, for example, addressing the need and overcoming some of the barriers of individuals through to the most efficient and effect use of resources and arrangements with stakeholders. The distinction between these two points is not always “neat and tidy” and our task was complicated by other factors including, but not limited to:

- The range of needs, and to some extent differences between the Northeast and Northwest sub-regions, and the very complexity of foundational learning itself which might be categorized at three levels (the lowest being “essential skills”, or up to approximately a grade 4 level, the next being “adult basic education”, or the middle ground approximately between grade 4 and grade 9/10, and the highest being “academic upgrading”, so that individuals are at the ready to pursue some form of postsecondary training.
- The scope of foundational learning, encompassing educational, vocational and life skills components, and includes a variety of other names such as “essential skills” and “Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN)”, “Adult Basic Education” or “Vocational Education Training (VET)”, is reflective of a range of approaches, priorities and placements within the hierarchy and structure of differing jurisdictions. These differences sometimes make comparisons or analyses more difficult.
- The subject matter, being broad and multi-faceted, and fairly fluid, makes staying abreast of recent developments, or to view matters or data within comparable time frames, complicated.
- There is no “accepted definition” of a “model” in the context of this subject matter. Our review, in some respects, might be best considered as from specific and select “lenses”, levels or perspectives. We are hopeful that these differing perspectives will help to bring greater understanding and, from it, Clearinghouse planners and other stakeholders may begin to move forward. The way forward might be via considering how best practices or different approaches could be used or adapted, or in a better understanding of advocacy efforts that might be desirable to effect change, or additional specific subject matter research that might be required.

In order to help to provide some focus our review and analysis divided into the following Sections:

- Models for Curriculum Development and Delivery;
- Models for Building Capacity and Creating Pathways;
- Models to Address Financial Issues;

- Emerging Models or Research; and
- Exploration of Activities in Other Countries.

Models for Curriculum Development and Delivery

Our key “takeaways” from our research in this area are summarized below.

- 1. Foundational learning, especially at lower “essential skills” levels, needs to be delivered in a way that it is, among other things, tasked based, employment oriented, and contextualized around the goals, experiences (including fears) and limitations of learners, and in a way that allows learners to readily absorb and stay abreast of progress.**

Given the above:

- Three models (“Aboriginal Essential Skills Journey”, “Ontario Task-based Curriculum” and “Essential Skills for Piping”) provide valuable and transferrable insights for the design and delivery of programs.
- The Khan Academy and Sunchild E-learning models show how technology can be integrated into teaching to address issues such as distance as well as innovative methods to deal with weaknesses such as mathematics that are particularly exacerbated by the skills requirements of many occupations likely to be in demand (reference Chapter 3 for more discussion on student Achievement and High School Diploma test results).
- TOWES provides an example of one of many models for the assessment of skills.
- Finally, the Feltham Community College and West Nottinghamshire College models provide insights as to how to help learners track progress and stay motivated to learn.

Models for Building Capacity and Creating Pathways

Our key “takeaways” from our research in this area are summarized below.

- 1. Each of the 13 models considered has aspects or components that, in our view, have applicability or potential benefit to help to address some of the barriers and issues associated with foundational learning in Northern Alberta.**

Below we attempt to provide a very brief summary of relevant aspects or benefits.

Promoting Essential Skills and Apprenticeship Training in Aboriginal Communities

- While the specific context of the initiative is Aboriginal and Apprenticeship related, the findings and recommendations related to contextualization of content, provisions for sharing information, and creation of pathways via mentoring, industry orientation and networking are important for any model pertaining to delivery of essential skills and can/should be adapted to any specific group or market.

Pathways to Education

- Works alongside the school system, providing after-school tutoring, mentoring and financial assistance to address the barriers that can stand in the way of education. Each student benefits from a personal relationship with their Student Parent Support Worker – part counsellor, advocate, confidante, social worker, and mediator – who motivates and guides students and their families, brings insight that can’t be found on report cards, and holds students accountable to the contract they sign in order to participate in the program.
- Students are provided with a financial incentive for attendance.

- Program is currently endorsed and funded by the Government of Canada.
- Activity mostly in larger centres and there may not be the critical mass in Northern Alberta required for tutors etc.

Industry Shared

- Involves employers and service providers in the co-design and delivery of training in order to leverage employment opportunities for job seekers with complex needs and foster economic development.
- Small allowances or payments to students for performance of “basic experience” functions that have been shown to be effective in fostering retention in programs, providing mentorship to students and providing some advantages to employers in terms of a readily trained entry level work force at the completion of the programs.

Organizational models

- Holistic, Lead Provider, Consortia and Partnership approaches were addressed.
- Circumstances in Northern Alberta with remoteness and lack of critical mass are indicative that a consortia approach may provide the most flexibility and cost effectiveness.

System for Adult Basic Education Support (SABES)

- A train the trainer program via online means in Massachusetts.

1000 Women (Mulheres Mil)

- The objectives of this long running program in Brazil, that has strong support from Canadian Community Colleges, are to focus on gender equity in access to education and the workforce with the ultimate result being improvements to family life, regional life, regional and national economic development and greater participation from disadvantaged women in the political process.

BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council

- Short, three to five day courses and may be particularly helpful for training mentors.
- The job profiling helps learners/workers to better appreciate how or why a particular skill is important.
- The method of funding some services (a levy on wages of several cents per hour) may be an effective method of funding industry programs in Northern Alberta.

Team Teaching/Summer

- A pre-college class is taught during a bridging space (such as between the end of a secondary school year and the beginning of a postsecondary year) by a “team” of Adult Basic Education and College level instructors.
- By also exposing students to a variety of educational delivery modalities (such as, for example, smaller group discussions and computer assisted learning) The goal is to provide essential basic skills so that students would be better prepared for their postsecondary experiences.

Advising

- Goal of increasing awareness of postsecondary options and admission requirements, usually through provision of information via workshops and presentations which students may attend and a focus on individual rather than group methods.
- Typically more applicable to advanced students with postsecondary potential and helps them to achieve best outcomes.

Dual Credit

- Provides learners a chance to complete secondary and (in some instances) pursue some postsecondary in a less “threatening” or familiar environment and may also present cost savings in terms of reduced tuition and living expenses (as it is sometimes not necessary to relocate until later in a program).
- It is a current priority of the Government of Alberta to explore ways and means to expand the dual credit model.

Career Pathways

- Key features of this model include: (1) teaching and learning of basic education and technical skills that are contextualized around a specific employment sector; (2) multiple levels of instruction; (3) curriculum that is “chunked” into clear steppingstones that are recognized by employers (e.g., specific certificates with increased job responsibilities and higher pay) and articulate to academic and career advancement pathways; and (4) intensive support services tailored to the expected challenges of the specific pathway.

Manitoba Adult Learning Centres

- Perhaps considered as a “hybrid” of store-front high schools and Alberta Community Adult Learning Centres.
- Centres have flexibility to adapt programming according to local needs, values and surroundings that are non-threatening, culturally sensitive and this and other services provided helps to reduce barriers to students.
- Possible for students to take/experiment some postsecondary courses for free.
- Centres may be affiliated with a range of organizations provide teaching standards are met, and a number are associated with trade unions and social service agencies, which helps to ensure specific needs are met and diversifies risks.

Wraparound

- “Roots” of development associated with services for refugees.
- Provides a method of harnessing and integrating social supports to learners.
- Currently implemented as a project with Aboriginal students at the College of New Caledonia in Quesnel, B.C.

Models to Address Financial Issues

Our key “takeaways” from our research in this area are summarized below.

1. In an era of restraint, the use of more creative financial solutions such as Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) and “pay for success” systems may be part of an array of “new and innovative” solutions.

Through a SIB, a government contracts with a partner organization to deliver a particular service, with payment conditional on improvements to an associated social outcome. The delivery agency obtains funding from a private financier or philanthropic entity or other investors. If the social outcome is achieved, the social impact bondholder receives a risk-adjusted rate of return from the government, while the government saves money because the improved social outcome offsets future expenditures.

The Government of Canada has signalled through “Action Plan 2012” that such mechanisms may play a greater role in the future and, in so doing, at this time, has not indicated a level of funding or strategy for existing programs such as those associated with Sector Councils, or Skills and Partnership Fund — Aboriginal (SPF), and Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS).

Theoretically, SIBs, like financial instruments such as derivatives, could be designed as a wide range of situations for both colleges and students.

While the Government of Alberta has yet to develop a position on Social Impact Bonds, it would be advisable for Clearinghouse planners to stay abreast of developments and issues.

2. Other financial models of interest include Education Maintenance Allowances and Incentive Bursaries or Scholarships.

Education Maintenance Allowances are relatively small weekly or monthly payments to learners in need to cover costs such as transportation, meals, child care or parking that act as barriers for some learners. In places like England, when tied to performance based systems such as maintenance of grades, the schemes have been successful in helping to ensure that students continue to attend classes.

“Incentive” bursaries or scholarships could also be structured so as to be payable to students (as a “bonus” for achievement under Training for Work programs or effectively as a “forgiveness” of tuition if certain goals were achieved. The “incentive” might also be structured as “pooled wages” paid by employers in the case of certain experience components and used to “pay-down” or “pay-off”, tuition fees or loans etc.

In situations where linkages with employers were better established (possibly, for example, the occupations in demand discussed in Chapter 4) there may be benefits to employers in terms of training and having access to skilled workers that may also offset a portion of the costs.

Emerging Models or Research

Our key “takeaways” from our research in this area are summarized below.

1. While each of the emerging models mentioned in Chapter 7 is of interest because of its relevance to “real issues” and potential solutions, the model that holds the most promise, in our view, is “Connecting Aboriginals to Manufacturing (CAM)” being undertaken by Workplace Experience Manitoba.

The experiences with the first group of participants have been positive with 13 out of 16 completing the program, and aspects of the program that are particularly attractive in providing a truly holistic and comprehensive “solution” include:

- The initial counselling and assessment, which includes a holistic family approach and prepares participants to leave their home communities;
- The ongoing “wrap-around support” that is provided;
- Program content which is contextualized but highly relevant and provides participants with a credential and a strong base of skills (welding, electrical, drafting etc) to consider further education; and
- Strong employer involvement and mentoring, which has led to pathways for employment for participants.

Exploration of Activities in Other Countries

Our key “takeaways” from our exploration of foundational learning related activities in other countries are summarized below.

1. We see a number of emerging trends that suggest movement toward more of a demand driven system and “reward” for achievement, which also argues for the need for greater emphasis on

planning performance indicators and outcomes (and degree of difficulty) and the length of programs.

Both Australia and England have “systems” in which there are a greater number of services providers, including those from the private sector, and there might be thought of as “competition” for learners.

Compensation (and/or the renewal of contracts to provide training services) is based on more specific achievement of goals or other indicators that are indicative of the degree of difficulty or cost in providing services, and greater emphasis will be placed on such factors when evaluating programs.

We believe that the funding model in England for the Foundation Learning program is worthy of study as it provides a means of adjusting fees paid to or amounts provided to services providers according to a range of factors. In our view, such a model may help to address some of the concerns expressed by some stakeholders about the cost of providing programs.

Finally, in both England and Australia, we see evidence of moving to longer-term programs to ensure that a broader range of skills in better integrated into the training provided to individuals.

2. The governance or delivery model/system in New Zealand may be worthy of exploration to determine if there are aspects that may help to improve foundational learning planning in Alberta or Northern Alberta.

The New Zealand model/system has more substantial linkages between the various stakeholders that, in recognizing the complexity of the problem, may help to improve information flow and accountability. A national body with responsibility for foundational learning as well as the creation of entities with mandates for specific groups (Maori and “Pacific Islanders”) may help to better represent the interests of these disadvantaged minorities that have rapidly growing populations (and bring the possibly a deterioration of skills, if not addressed).

Other reports related to foundational learning in Northern Alberta (*“Foundational Learning and Diversity Sub-Committee: Report to the Learning Alberta Steering Committee, page 13*) have made mention to the need for a more formal “administrative authority”. While the exact nature of any group, or specific need is debateable, and beyond the scope of this project, the need for and benefits of better linkages and information flow with the private sector, other government bodies for matters such as marketing, research and administration are not.

3. We like the formal scalability and paths for progression in the English Foundation Learning program.

The system makes use of small “bite sized” learning opportunities with clarity as to how they might be combined to form higher levels of credentials. A review of Alberta’s system, to determine if aspects of the English system might be utilized, might help to make the pursuit of improved skills less intimidating for some.

4. We note that foundational learning is free in Norway for most citizens and for many learners in England.

Rather than a “gratis” system in Northern Alberta, we suggest that there may be scope to effectively reduce the cost to some learners via mechanisms such as a refund or rebate on tuition (possibly as an “incentive” bursary or scholarship), provided certain performance goals were achieved. Another scenario to achieve this outcome might be via the payment of “wages” during

work experience components that could go into a “pool” to cover a portion or all of a learner’s tuition or costs upon successful completion. The payment is “justified” because of the economic value of the services provided by the learner to the employer or experience provider.

II. Recommendations

In noting the complexity of the foundational learning issue, and the limits of our more modest research, our principal recommendations arising as a result of our findings and conclusions are summarized below. We have grouped them into two phases: “Near-term” and “Longer-term”.

A. Near-term Recommendations

Curriculum Design and “In-Class” Delivery

- 1. Review policies and procedures to ensure that best practices are followed so that suitable learning atmospheres are created according to the backgrounds of individuals and that content is task-based and contextualized according to occupations and the back grounds of the individuals.**

Generally speaking, learner outcomes are better when the above-noted tenets have been considered, especially for lower skill leveled learners in programs with life and work place skills components.

- 2. In the absence of better information as to skills shortages and training needs at local levels, and as part of a broader strategy to improve linkages with other stakeholders, and to provide meaningful pathways to learners, begin to consider how the skills needs and levels of difficulty for the Skill Level “C” and “D” occupations discussed in Chapter 4 might be incorporated into programming.**

The specific occupations are summarized in the following table.

**Occupations for Potential Linkages with Foundational Learning
Programming in Northern Alberta**

Occupational Category	Level	Occupational Category	Level
Heavy Equipment Operators (Except Crane)	C	Food and Beverage Servers	C
Administrative Clerks	C	Bartenders	C
Automotive Mechanical Installers and Servicers	C/D	General Office Clerks	C
Construction Trades Helpers and Labourers	D	Light Duty Cleaners	D
Residential and Commercial Installers and Servicers	C	Janitors, Caretakers and Superintendents	D
Accounting and Related Clerks	C	Payroll Clerks	C
Customer Service Representatives - Financial	C	Receptionists and Switchboard Operators	C
Customer Service, Information and Related Clerks	C	Specialized Cleaners	D
Other Trades Helpers and Labourers	D	Hotel Front Desk Clerks	C

The specific skill types and levels are outlined in the following table.

Usage and Degree of Difficulty for the Identified Occupations

	Skill Level "C"		Skill Level "D"	
	Skills Utilization	Average Difficulty	Skills Utilization	Average Difficulty
Reading Text	11/20	1.99	11/20	1.84
Document Use	9/22	2.11	12/22	2.06
Writing Skills	8/21	1.50	6/21	1.43
Numeracy: Tasks	4/5	2.07	5/5	2.02
Numeracy: Mathematical Foundations Used	12/20	N/A	12/20	N/A
Oral Communication: Purpose	35/132	N/A	29/132	N/A
Oral Communication: Modes of Communication	3/4	1.82	4/4	1.55
Thinking Skills	1/6	1.85	1/6	1.61
Working with Others	7/12	N/A	8/12	N/A
Computer Use	4/11	1.79	3/11	1.36

3. Explore ways to enhance the effectiveness of on-line and video-conferencing approaches.

There is little doubt that online and video-conferencing approaches, in general, and specific approaches such as Sunchild E-Learning and the Khan system will likely play a major role in the delivery of foundational learning programs due to issues associated with cost of program delivery, distance and lack of critical mass of participants.

However, lack of bandwidth is considered to already be an emerging problem (despite initiatives such as "Supernet") and a resistance to the on-line and video methodologies by some learners is another.

While bandwidth is a potentially expensive issue that may require innovative approaches which may only be supported with convincing "evidence" of benefits, the resistance issue may be overcome by use of approaches that create comfort and familiarity. In this regard, "family oriented" sessions such as Skyping to other people in other places might "orient" individuals and may also have other benefits such as enhancing citizenship, world outlook or social skills.

Planning and Administration

1. Address potential weaknesses in the establishment of goals, performance metrics and ongoing monitoring of outcomes for programs and individuals.

Our discussions with stakeholders are suggestive that goals for programming are not well-defined in some instances, that key performance indicators or metrics are not available and ongoing monitoring over a longer-term period, particularly from a holistic perspective is limited.

We note that other jurisdictions such as Australia and New Zealand are transitioning to more competitive funding regimes based on outcomes and performance and that Alberta will soon start to phase in Results Based Budgeting.

Existing monitoring programs are weak in that the emphasis is often a "binary" "employed or not employed" check at short intervals following completion of programs such as Training for Work. More comprehensive and holistic data from additional longitudinal studies may be required to achieve a better or complete understanding of the impacts of programming. Furthermore, such "evidence" of success may help to garner more interest and support for skills enhancement from

other stakeholders such as employers, community organizations, and individuals themselves (who may have reservations about the desirability and impact of improved education and skills).

2. Review existing policies and practices to address potential weaknesses in communication and information sharing among stakeholders including existing and potential learners, private sector employers and other levels of government.

Our feedback from stakeholders is indicative that there is a relatively low level of awareness by the private sector in terms of the foundational learning programming at colleges, and that improvements could be derived from increased dialogue and information flow between differing levels of government. In addition, students may be missing opportunities for enhanced funding (based on government priorities).

If, and as, additional pressure is placed on stakeholders to find more innovative and cost effective methods of program delivery, well established and free flowing channels of communication will be vital.

Specific potential opportunities in this regard might include:

- Use of limited peak time (when people are seeking assistance with training or job search) newspaper and radio advertising.
- Provision of information sessions to health care providers, government service organizations, Band councils, and other community-based organizations that offer employment or skills upgrading assistance, as well as other organizations such as food banks, children's schools, parenting groups, churches or coffee shops.
- Provision of information sessions to local employers and unions.
- More effective, goal oriented and results based promotion of skills improvement opportunities at career fairs and jobs fairs and similar "employment assistance" events and other in-person, web-site or email methods.
- Use of "ambassadors" who have shown success in the past.
- Use of tools such as MS SharePoint to record experiences (successes, disappointments and lessons learned) and expand sharing on a more timely or current basis.

3. Review existing policies and practices to explore potential gains that might realized with respect to pooling of marketing, contract management, research and other related issues regarding linkages with stakeholders.

Other studies in relation to foundational learning administration have suggested the creation of a "Foundational Learning Authority" or a Campus Alberta approach to the issues. The specific feasibility of such alternatives is beyond the scope of this engagement; however, we are strongly of the opinion that gains might be realized with a more coordinated approach which could facilitate greater flexibility and ensure, in some instances, the economies of scale required for programming.

Linkages with the K-12 System

1. Explore the potential for more dual credit programming and sharing of facilities.

The expansion of the dual credit system is a priority of the Government of Alberta. It has a number of benefits that may help to reduce barriers faced by Northern Albertan foundational learners including:

- Helping to reduce the need to "go away" for training, or at least reducing the required time period in some instances. The associated costs, travel problems, lack of preparation, isolation

and lack of fit are frequently mentioned as barriers that might be at least partially overcome with this approach.

- Students might also be gradually exposed to other more advanced and different learning techniques, as discussed in the “team teaching” model, and the impact of barriers to handicapped students might also be reduced.
- Sharing of school facilities may provide a more comforting atmosphere to some learners, may help to reduce costs and may have added benefits including the integration of whole families into a better learning environment, and may provide for better access to social and medical support services, identified by stakeholders as priorities, and frequently provided at schools such as a school nurse in the context of the “wraparound” model.

2. Explore ways to improve outcomes on Achievement and Diploma test exams, and other performance indicators such as graduation and transition rates.

Some experts would argue that the postsecondary transition problem really starts with some students at the ages of 12 to 13 or younger. We note a deterioration of Achievement test results in Grade 9. The specific reasons are not part of the scope of this project; however, it is apparent that the “legacy” of the problems is long-lived and particularly unfortunate when most of the occupations with strong prospects have math requirements and educators and employers lament about the lack of soft skills of some graduates of foundational learning programs and the need for possibly longer programs to address the problems or consideration of “European style” programming. Other potential “tools” might be greater use of mentors or ambassadors, who could reinforce the importance of learning, or “borrowing” from science or math “camps” in a way that might present material in a more relevant or contextualized manner to younger students.

Addressing Other Potentially Urgent Gaps

1. Investigate the need to consider the expansion of services to address a growing numbers of immigrants and temporary foreign workers.

As noted in the Findings and Conclusions, these groups appear to be increasing or seeking higher levels of services in the two larger centres, Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray and may have different needs compared to the “stereotypes” traditionally in existence for those in need of skills improvement.

2. As a temporary measure until other longer-term solutions are found (based on policy decisions), we would recommend that Clearinghouse colleges consult with other stakeholders to consider how the problems of expiration of Training for Work benefits after 30 months and inequitable funding for some First Nations learners might be resolved.

Both are considered to be barriers for learners. The first matter is more of an internal, Government of Alberta nature and may be easier to resolve by making participants more aware of other funding options, such as student loans. The second matter extends beyond the jurisdiction of the Government of Alberta and may require tactful and strategic diplomacy or advocacy to change policies of the Government of Canada or First Nations who disburse funds.

Other Models to Explore in Greater Detail

1. At this juncture, our view of priorities for models to consider in greater detail would include: Industry Shared; Wraparound; Education Maintenance Allowances; Pathways to Education; and Connecting Aboriginals to Manufacturing.

While all of the models that were reviewed were considered to have potential value for helping to address problems and reduce barriers, our rationales for more detailed study and possible implementation or adaptation are discussed in the following table.

Priority Models

Name	Rationale
Industry Shared	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fosters demand driven solutions that drive economic development particularly at local levels.• Provides a method of ensuring “paid work experience” (which helps to overcome financial barriers) and promotes mentorship and coaching.
Wraparound	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Helps to ensure that learners’ social and medical needs are better met.• Can be implemented with dual credit model so that foundational learners have access to primary and secondary system supports at relatively little cost.
Education Maintenance Allowances	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proven to be effective to help students of low income families to overcome small financial barriers such as meals and transportation costs.
Pathways to Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An established and well respected program that shows how a range of barriers (social, financial and learning) might be addressed.
Connecting Aboriginals to Manufacturing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Highly relevant to Northern Alberta.• Appears to address most barriers in a comprehensive and holistic manner.

Additional consultation with stakeholders, studies of feasibility and the development of pilot projects (with appropriate goals, measurements and monitoring and reporting criteria) may be desirable.

Program Funding

- 1. It is recommended that strong consideration be given to planning increasing the resources available for the delivery of foundational learning programming.**

The business case developed as part of this project, involving an expansion of “spaces” by 700 FLE students (a 14% to 16% increase in the current enrolments of the Clearinghouse colleges) and requiring approximately \$5.7 million per year from government and \$630,000 per year from employers or other parties for five years, although hypothetical, showed strong benefits and returns to the Government of Alberta and private industry. Fine-tuning of the conditions and assumptions and timing of funding used for the business case is now appropriate. The specific amounts may be affected by specific programming and learner needs (transportation, remoteness, critical mass requirements, complexity, administration and other supports as examples) and other linkages established with other stakeholders or enrichments associated with adoption or adaptation any of the models reviewed as part of this project.

Furthermore, and expansion of funding will likely be necessary to achieve the goals and objectives set by the Government of Alberta and key ministries in 2012-15 Strategic and Business plans.

Finally, the investment would appear to be warranted to meet future manpower and skills needs of two of Alberta’s key economic engines, oilsands and oil and gas, which are forecast to grow by as much as 73% by 2021 and also are expected to be severely compromised by expected retirements of as much as 30% of the work force over the next ten years.

- 2. It is recommended that the concept of an “Education Maintenance Allowance” (EMA) be considered to encourage secondary students, particularly those from low income families, to stay in school and achieve satisfactory progress.**

EMAs have been shown as an effective means of encouraging attendance and maintenance of satisfactory grades in the United Kingdom, Saskatchewan and for participants in the “Pathways” program model, discussed in Chapter 7. The “allowance” (typically to offset costs such as meals or transportation) might be paid out in small weekly amounts or could be “pooled” as a contribution (bursary or scholarship) toward the cost of postsecondary education.

B. Longer-term Recommendations

Longer-term, the development of solutions to address foundational learning issues and gaps will require greater use of innovative and creative approaches. The Government of Canada has stated that it will seek greater use of social financing approaches as part of its strategy. As noted above, for these approaches to be adopted or implemented will require the necessary evidence from sound planning and performance management systems, meet the needs of all stakeholders in a fair manner, and achieve the necessary “buy-in” from stakeholders for provision of resources and sharing of risks. These are matters for which greater consultation and negotiation with both external and internal funders may be required.

Going forward, we believe that the colleges in the Clearinghouse consortium will need to be prepared to participate accordingly. A number of recommendations in this light are made in this section.

- 1. It is recommended that Clearinghouse college planners begin to become more familiar with social funding concepts and possibilities, such as Social Impact Bonds, as possible alternative to direct funding by the Government of Alberta.**

While a plethora of issues would need to be resolved and an official position in support would need to be taken by the Government of Alberta, and tax policy changes would likely be required, social funding approaches might be appropriate for consideration for solutions such as:

- A new series of scholarships or bursaries for needy students, possibly driven by some incentive or progress factors.
- The provision of funding for existing bursaries or scholarships in the context of “sponsoring individuals” or creating units of sponsorship as negotiable instruments.
- A way of providing new funding to implement programming through colleges, industry associations or private businesses.
- The establishment of Education Maintenance Allowances for primary, secondary and postsecondary learners in need.

- 2. It is recommended that Clearinghouse colleges continue to explore ways and means that might facilitate more effective relationships or partnerships in the future.**

While this was also mentioned in near-term recommendations, it is a matter that will need to be treated on an “ever-green” (continuous improvement) basis. Some specific examples of priorities might include:

- Sharing of facilities with other private and public sector stakeholders;
- Sharing of information for planning purposes;
- Consideration of systems/models in countries such as New Zealand;
- Mentoring and training; and
- Development of better longer-term planning, performance and monitoring procedures, criteria and outcomes measurement that would support more efficient and effective utilization of resources and “the case” for “buy-in” for provision of resources, which might be via some of the more innovative means or initiatives discussed above.

Appendix 1 - Covering Letter and Questionnaire

September, X, 2012

FOR THE ATTENTION OF:

Dear _____:

Re: Northern Alberta Development Council and Labour Market Information Clearinghouse: Foundational Learning in Northern Alberta

This covering letter and accompanying questionnaire are follow-up to a recent brief discussion or telephone message from **Steven Lakey** or **Gurpreet Sidhu**.

The Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC), in conjunction with four Northern Alberta colleges (Keyano College, Grande Prairie Regional College, Northern Lakes College and Portage College), collectively known as the Labour Market Information Clearinghouse is undertaking a research project regarding "Foundational Learning". Foundational Learning is similar to other basic educational programs with which you might have some familiarity such as: Adult Basic Education; Language, Literacy and Numeracy; and/or Essential Skills training. There is an emphasis on academic, workplace and life skills issues, according to the specific needs and goals of individuals.

The very low educational (as indicated by a range of measures maintained by Alberta Education and School Districts) and other skill levels for some residents of Northern Alberta prevent access to employment and/or post-secondary training. Yet, with a forecast skills and labour shortage in Northern Alberta, the ability to achieve the full potential of economic and social growth may be compromised unless every available individual is engaged to the extent of his or her ability.

The project aims to gain a better understanding of matters related to needs, content and delivery, implications and how stakeholders (including potential students, the colleges, community organizations and potential employers) might best work together to overcome barriers and optimize outcomes.

You and your organization have been specifically selected to be included in this project. Over the next week or two, we would like to schedule an interview/ discussion with you (and possibly other members of your organization) that we would expect to last for 45 to 60 minutes.

To make the best use of your valuable time, and so that you might have an opportunity for reflection, research or consultation with your colleagues before our discussion, the topics that we would like to explore are included in the accompanying questionnaire. Our list of topics is comprehensive and in some instances we are striving for an "ideal" level of detail. We fully appreciate that some may have limited applicability for your organization, or that it may be necessary to deal with the topics in a more general fashion.

Should you have any concerns or questions about this project, Natalie Butler, Senior Northern Development Officer of the NADC, may be contacted at (780) 624-6350 or Natalie.butler@gov.ab.ca.

In the near future, Gurpreet or I will contact you to schedule a convenient time for a discussion.

Thank you for your time and interest in helping to explore this timely and important matter.

Yours sincerely,

Steven Lakey

**Northern Alberta Development Council and labour Market Information Clearinghouse
Foundational Learning Planning Survey**

Further to the accompanying covering letter, we would like to explore your perceptions regarding Foundation Learning in Northern Alberta, including matters such as associated barriers, needs, issues, and potential solutions.

The types of topics that we would like to explore are contained in the balance of this questionnaire. As noted in the covering letter, the questionnaire is comprehensive. We appreciate that not all of the topics may be relevant for your organization and that it may be necessary to address some in a more general manner.

I. Background: Details of Participant and Organization

1. Please tell us a little bit about yourself and your organization, as below.

Category	Response
Participant Name	
Position	
Organization	
Address	
Telephone	
E-mail	
URL of web site	
Type of organization and principal activities	
Year of creation or incorporation	
Approximate number of employees	
Approximate number of members or clients	
Space for Other Comments	

II. Foundational Learning in Your Organization and Community

1. We would like to obtain a better understanding of the Foundational Learning network in your “community” (geographic or stakeholder) and the role that it has played in or for your organization.

a. To the best of your recollection, what Foundational Learning, Literacy, Language, Numeracy (LLN) or Essential Skills type of initiatives has your organization been involved with in the past year as either a provider or consumer of services?

As a Provider	As a Consumer

b. To the best of your knowledge, Please tell us of the other players, or service providers (public or private sector) within your “community” that come to mind with respect to the provision or delivery of Foundational Learning, Literacy, Language, Numeracy (LLN) or Essential Skills type training.

Name	Specific Role/Program (if known)

c. If applicable, please tell us about your organization’s main contacts, linkages or service providers for the following. (Please provide any additional comments that might add context to help improve our understanding.)

Issue	Response
Provision of training	
Volunteer tutors	
Provision of facilities or space	
Pathways to employment or work place experience	
Career mentors or role models	
Provision of financing for programs	
Provision of financial support for participants	
Other ()	

2. If possible, please tell us a little bit more about some of the details of your organization's involvement with Foundational Learning type training as a consumer or provider. Let's focus on say your most significant initiative over the past year according to the criteria in the following table.

Criteria	Comments
Initiative Name	
Objective	
"Formal" objectives and evaluative criteria developed? (Y/N)	
Were participants assessed before inclusion? (Y/N)	
Service Provider	
Number of Participants	
Principal Participants	
Brief Description of Activities and Format	
Duration/Length	
Overall Cost/Budget	
What was the direct cost to participants?	
Other Funding "Sponsors or Patrons"	
Please tell us briefly about the outcomes	
Please tell us about any unexpected outcomes (good or bad)	
What lessons did you learn?	
What concerns do you have?	
What would you change if you could do it again?	

3. On a scale of “1” to “5” with “1” being “very low” (little problem or concern) and “5” being “very high” (great problem or concern), for the provision of Foundational Learning type training suitable for your stakeholders, how would you rate your organization’s situation with respect to the issues in the table below? (Please provide any additional comments that might add context to help improve our understanding.)

Issue	Score	Comments
Access to or ability to provide training in general		
Budget available given perceived priorities and needs		
Access to or ability to provide reasonably priced training		
Scheduling and access to adequate facilities		
Availability of supports (learning materials, computers, other equipment, furniture and Internet etc		
Availability of volunteers		
Quality of volunteers		
Availability of mentors or role models		

III. Future Needs and Desired Changes

1. Please discuss:

- a. What would be your organization’s up to top three desired changes to the system in Northern Alberta to improve the delivery of Foundational Learning training.

Priority	Discussion of desired change
1	
2	
3	

- b. What would be your organization’s up to top three priorities for improving linkages with other players or obtaining or sharing information?

Priority	Improving Linkages	Sharing/Obtaining Information
1		
2		
3		

2. With respect to the four colleges involved with this research, if applicable, please briefly provide us with your thoughts or suggestions with respect to the issues identified in the following table.

	Information that you would like to know	Specific suggestions for new programs/services	Specific suggestions for improving linkages or service delivery
Keyano			
Grande Prairie			
Portage			
Northern Lakes			

IV. Non-professional Staffing and Skills Requirements

1. If applicable for your organization or “community/stakeholders”, looking back over the past year, to the best of your ability:

	1	2	3
a. What has been the three largest occupational or skills needs (or opportunities) types?			
b. Net increase needed/available			
c. Hiring/placement difficulty			
d. How would you rate the essential skills of the pool of individuals hired (or placed)? Please use a scale of “1” (requiring significant improvement) to “5” (requiring little improvement).			
• Reading			
• Document use			
• Numeracy			
• Writing			
• Oral communication			
• Working with others			
• Thinking			
• Computer use			
• Continuous learning			

2. Looking ahead to the next two years, to the best of your ability, what are the top five non-professional occupational needs or opportunities for your organization or its members?

	1	2	3	4	5
Occupation					
# Needed					

V. Perceptions Pertaining to Select Possible Solutions

We would like to obtain your comments and suggestions pertaining to some of our research and certain more innovative models, concepts or initiatives that we believe may hold potential for helping to improve the success of Foundational Learning programming in Northern Alberta.

1. Funding via Use of “Social Impact Bonds”

In this age when government resources are becoming particularly stressed and stretched, Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) are an emerging type of financial instrument that may allow non-profit and for-profit organizations to take new approaches to achieve more cost-effective social outcomes. Through a SIB, a government contracts with a partner organization to deliver a particular service, with payment conditional on improvements to an associated social outcome. The delivery agency obtains funding from a private financier or philanthropic entity or other investors. If the social outcome is achieved, the social impact bondholder receives a risk-adjusted rate of return from the government, while the government saves money because the improved social outcome offsets future expenditures. If the venture is not successful, the investors are out-of-pocket. In our view, the nature of the mechanism fosters a need for success.

In Economic Action Plan 2012, the Federal Government has indicated an interest in exploring greater use of SIBs. The Government of Alberta has yet to develop a formal position; however, it is noted that Alberta Treasury Branches has initiated a “Social Incubator Fund” with an initial emphasis on issues related to homelessness.

Given the above, if applicable:

- a. Please provide us with any specific suggestions, rationales and objectives for projects that might be set up as “pilots” to test the concept for Foundational Learning.**

- b. Please provide us with any specific suggestions as to organizations that would be good candidates to participate as financiers.**

- c. How likely is it, in your opinion, that your organization would be receptive to providing financing to explore this concept? While there are obviously a number of issues that would need to be resolved before implementation (such as amounts, terms and conditions, goals, objectives and monitoring and evaluative criteria, as some examples) what other major issues or barriers do you foresee?**

2. Allowances for Students

In some other jurisdictions, small allowances have been paid to participants who do not qualify for traditional “social assistance”.

Such allowances, of say \$30 to \$50 per week, (called “Education Maintenance Allowances” in the United Kingdom), have been used in the past with students from low income households and have proven to be successful in keeping students “in school” by reducing “day-to-day” financial barriers and have had other demonstrated benefits such as better performance and greater accountability on the part of students, as well as a sense of “belonging and pride”.

A potential “win-win” situation for employers or students would be to have employers participating in Foundation Learning programs pay the allowance over the course of the program in exchange for mentored work experience sessions as part of the program.

Situations where the concept might be viable would be where there would be a match between the needs of the employer and entry level task-based activities that the employer could pass on for the student to gain specific experience needed for certain jobs according to the employer’s methods and procedures.

Given the above, if applicable:

- a. Please discuss specific examples of projects within your organization or stakeholders in your “community” that might be receptive to exploring this approach. (Situations involving more remote communities would be of particular interest.)**

- b. How likely is it, in your opinion, that your organization would be receptive to providing financing to explore this concept? While there are obviously a number of issues that would need to be resolved before implementation (such as amounts, terms and conditions, goals, objectives and monitoring and evaluative criteria, as some examples) what other major issues or barriers do you foresee?**

VI. Conclusion

1. Please recommend any other systems, programs or models, in Alberta, Canada or other parts of the world that you believe might be worthy of our consideration to address the problem of improving poor skills.

2. Please suggest any other outstanding individuals or organizations for us to contact in our efforts to better understand problems or issues or potential solutions.

3. Please take this opportunity to provide any other comments about this project or survey.

4. May we share or discuss your responses with others?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR VALUABLE TIME AND ASSISTANCE!

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