

REPORT



# **Foundational Learning Needs for Adult Calgarians**

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Needs Assessment Report  
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Calgary Learns gathers input on a continuous basis from stakeholders in the field of adult foundational learning. This ensures that our funding and additional projects are addressing the key needs in our city. With Calgary Learns' Board of Directors in the process of setting our strategic directions, we decided to undertake a more formal and comprehensive process this year.

Throughout the past six months, we have gathered data from key stakeholders in the field: learners, facilitators, leaders, consultants and funders. With over 145 participants and representation from 59 organizations, we received rich input on the needs of adult foundational learners and potential steps we can take to address them as a community. We are personally grateful to everyone who participated and kindly donated their time, perspective and expertise.

Calgary Learns appreciates the capacity building funding we received to undertake this project. We wish to thank The Calgary Foundation, First Calgary Financial and the Province of Alberta for their generous support.

Our hope is that this document will also be a useful tool to other community organizations who work with foundational learners.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nancy Purdy".

Nancy Purdy  
Executive Director  
Calgary Learns

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Larson".

Brian Larson  
Vice-President, Chair, Strategic Planning Committee  
Calgary Learns



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## INTRODUCTION

### Who is Calgary Learns?

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Calgary Learns is dedicated to helping adult Calgarians acquire the necessary basic skills to thrive in life and fully participate in community. As part of the provincial Community Adult Learning Program (CALP), Calgary Learns funds foundational learning programs for adults in Calgary in the areas of: literacy, English language learning, community issues and employment enhancement. Alberta Innovation and Advanced Education outline the 4 outcomes in their Building Vibrant Learning Communities, to which we must align our funding:

1. Enhanced access and participation of adults in learning.
2. Increased literacy and essential foundation skills of adults.
3. Strengthened pathways and successful transitions for adult learners.
4. Increased capacity and alignment of community learning providers with public post-secondary institutions.

In 2013, Calgary Learns granted \$1,048,922 to organizations for foundational literacy and essential skills programs for adults. Calgary Learns also worked to leverage additional funding sources in order to help meet the needs of foundational learners in our city. Through other government and foundation grants, as well as private donations, Calgary Learns is building the capacity of organizations to integrate essential skills into their existing community programs (Integrating Foundational Learning or IFL program), incorporate effective culturally appropriate strategies into programs serving the urban Aboriginals (Adult Urban Aboriginal Learning Project) and increase collaboration of organizations serving foundational learners (networking, community consultations, LOLA awards). Calgary Learns undertook this needs assessment to inform their work and the work of others serving learners so that adult foundational learners could be better served in Calgary.

### What is literacy?

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“Literacy is the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create, communicate and compute, using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy involves a continuum of learning in enabling individuals to achieve his or her goals, develop his or her knowledge and potential, and participate fully in community and wider society.” (Adult Learning and Education: Canada progress report for the UNESCO Global Report on Adult Learning and Education)

Literacy has personal, social and economic benefits for everyone. Ipsos Reid found 9 out of 10 Canadians agree that improving literacy levels in Canada is key to improving the country’s economy. Individuals with stronger literacy skills have been shown to have higher income, better health, greater social and civic engagement, lifelong access to learning and less involvement with the justice system.

To describe the specific components or skills of literacy, the Essential Skills Framework is used and includes the 9 essential skills. These include: reading, writing, numeracy, oral communications, working with others, document use, digital technology, thinking skills and continuous learning. These nine skills are like Velcro - the skills to which all other learning sticks.

## Calgary context

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Calgary is a vibrant city of 1,149,552 citizens (2013). This year Calgary was ranked as the number one in MoneySense magazine's annual **Best Places to Live in Canada** based on hard data such as employment, housing prices, crime, weather and household income. Although many enjoy comfortable lifestyles, one out of every five workers in Calgary is making less than \$15/hour and sadly, thirteen percent of employed people earn less than \$13/hour<sup>1</sup>. Individuals with stronger literacy skills have been shown to have higher income, as well as better health, greater social and civic engagement, lifelong access to learning and less involvement with the justice system.

According to the International Assessment of Literacy Skills, 38% of Calgarians have low literacy skills. There are higher percentages of certain groups that may fit into this statistic and require foundational learning support although citizens from all walks of life could require support:

### Aboriginal

The Aboriginal population of the Calgary region has been growing faster than any other urban center in Canada. The last long form census in 2006 indicated that there were 26,575 aboriginals in the Calgary Metropolitan Area which represented 2.5% of the population. Historical disenfranchisement and negative experiences with educational institutions have strongly contributed to the overall Aboriginal education levels. In Calgary, 40% of Aboriginal people have less than a high school education. In the non-Aboriginal population this figure is 26%. Six percent have a university degree as compared to 19% of the non-Aboriginal population<sup>2</sup>. High school completion rates for Aboriginal persons have improved in recent years however they are still much lower than the rates for non-Aboriginal persons<sup>3</sup>.

### Immigrants to Calgary

Calgary has always had a steady number of immigrants living in the city. However, most recent years reveal a much faster growth in the immigrant population (15.5 percent between 1996 and 2001, 28 percent between 2001 and 2006 and 24 percent between 2006 and 2011). The biggest increases are seen for non-permanent residents. Their numbers increased by 96.3 percent to 23,320 between 2006 and 2011.

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<sup>1</sup> Public Interest Alberta. [http://pialberta.org/sites/default/files/Documents/2013 PIA Low Wage Fact Sheet - Calgary.pdf](http://pialberta.org/sites/default/files/Documents/2013%20PIA%20Low%20Wage%20Fact%20Sheet%20-%20Calgary.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Calgary Urban Aboriginal Initiative Consultation Report. *Removing Barriers: A Listening Circle*. 1999.

<sup>3</sup> The City of Calgary. *Facts About Aboriginal Persons in Calgary*. 2010.

In 2010, Calgary's total immigrant population was estimated at 304,000 people, which represents almost 30 per cent of the total population. Language ability is often cited as one of the most important aspects in immigrant settlement, affecting both social and labour market integration. According to the 2011 census 27,040 Calgarians have no knowledge of English<sup>4</sup>.

### ***Drop Out Rates***

In Calgary 25% of students do not finish high school<sup>5</sup>.

### ***Poverty***

Poverty affects 1 in 10 Calgarians . Those living in poverty include working families, children and seniors. When people lack the income necessary to meet their basic needs they are often forced to make difficult choices between things that most people take for granted. This can lead to compromising the amount or quality of food purchased, living in unhealthy or unsafe environments, or foregoing educational or other activities important for healthy living<sup>6</sup>.

### ***Seniors***

Baby boomers started to enter their senior years in 2011. At that time 10% of the population was aged 65+ and it is projected that by 2021 that number will rise to 15%. Typically baby boomers have higher levels of education. However, the highest percentage of people in Canada with low literacy skills currently is comprised of older Canadians. Statistics tell us the older you are, the less likely you are to have the literacy skills needed for everyday life - this is due in large part to the fact that 40% of Canadians over 65 have not completed primary school. Low literacy levels can have serious consequences for seniors. Poor literacy skills may lower their quality of life and may even increase their health and safety risks<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Calgary Local Immigration Partnership, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> United Way of Calgary and Area. *"All In" for Youth*. <http://www.calgaryunitedway.org/main/our-work/all-in-for-youth>

<sup>6</sup> United Way of Calgary and Area. *What is Poverty?* 2012.

<sup>7</sup> ABC Life Literacy Canada. *General Questions About Literacy*. <http://abclifeliteracy.ca/literacyQ%2526A>

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Introduction

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From May to October of 2013 Calgary Learns collected information on the needs of adult foundational learners in Calgary.

An advisory committee was convened to provide input on design and content, followed by a five step process to collect and analyze the information. This included a community consultation (50 individuals), stakeholder interviews (19 individuals), learner interviews (65 in groups or individually), organizational round tables (3 sessions each with 6 participants) and a brief look at related research and articles. In total 59 different organizations provided input. The majority of information was collected by Calgary Learns with some assistance and analysis from Solutions at Work Inc.

Information collected at each step in the process was used to design the future steps in the research. As a result the questions were not the same from one step or group to another. For example, individual learners were only asked about their own situations and needs. The other participants were asked questions that can be grouped as follows:

- trends and challenges
- about the information collection process, process
- what resources are available and where to increase capacity
- best practices and what is working

As the primary purpose of the process was to identify needs in Calgary, this report focuses on the trends and challenges with some discussion of best or promising practices and what is working well. Based on these results, the report also includes some suggested next steps for action.

## Summary of What We Heard

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### *Trends and Challenges*

The most common trends identified at our community consultation, stakeholder interviews and round table discussions are listed below. We have also included some direct comments from participants.

The estimated percentages of adults with learning disabilities in Canada:  
30%–70% in prisons  
25%–40% on income support  
15%–30% in job training programs

#### ***Foundational learners exhibit complexities that add to their learning challenges.***

Adults in foundational learning programs can include people with

- various disabilities (mental illness, learning disabilities, developmental disabilities),
- cultural differences
- challenging life situations
- individual goals for taking classes
- varying levels of skills

Practitioners cite that many of their learners now face multiple barriers and have increasingly divergent needs. Therefore, there are added challenges in assessing learners, supporting them, setting reasonable goals and measuring individual progress. In some cases learners do not know their own challenges.

#### ***Instruction needs to become more learner-centered.***

In foundational programs, it is critical to understand how to facilitate so that adult learners' ideas are included and programs are not strictly content driven. Programs need to adhere to adult learning principles, adapt to individual learning needs and goals, as well, as provide alternative learning strategies or technologies to best support learners.

*“Learners need to have input, otherwise it is so easy to lose sight of them.”*

*“We live in a technological world and programs need to reflect it.”*

#### ***The interrelationship among the skills learners need adds complexity to the delivery of foundational programs.***

Accessing content in learning programs may require learners to develop multiple skills. Many practitioners noted that development of Essential Skills needs to be incorporated into programs. For example, teaching literacy when the learner is not literate in his or her first language illustrates the huge challenge for some literacy programs. The need for thinking skills, working with others, oral communications and digital literacy were often highlighted. Others noted that to fully prepare learners in employment skill programs also requires the development of problem solving, self-management and cultural awareness skills.

### ***Programs need to take a more holistic approach.***

To successfully remove barriers for learners, programs need to address childcare, transportation, the balance between job and learning, and other stresses based on family or life situations. Learners need to develop self-confidence, self-esteem and their own support systems (peers, family, or community). This approach should also be applied to instructors and organizations.

*“Programs need to empower learners and build their capacity and resiliency.”*

#### Did you know?

- 27,040 Calgarians have no knowledge of English.
- 25% of students in Calgary do not finish high school.
- 1 in 10 Calgarians are affected by poverty which often results in foregoing educational opportunities.
- The Aboriginal population has been growing faster in Calgary than any other urban centre in Canada
- 40% of Aboriginal people statistically having less than high school education

### ***Attitudes and environment can create barriers.***

Many foundational learners face added external barriers in Calgary. Practitioners and learners cited specific examples such as the stigma related to mental health issues, coming out of the correctional system and systemic issues like over-complicated applications forms or systems to navigate. We find greater need for foundational adult learning opportunities where these trends intersect in our community. We need to pay attention to Calgary’s alarming high school drop-out rate, the growing number of immigrants and urban Aboriginals and the increasing gap between the “have’s” and “have not’s”

### ***Funding and resourcing foundational learning is a growing challenge.***

Some participants indicated that, while funders focus on specific outcomes (e.g. employment focus), the timeframe and resources allocated are not adequate to break down the barriers to learners’ success. Others mentioned funding challenges such as:

- the constraints funders place on their support
- the need to match funds
- the short-term funding commitments (e.g. Calgary Learns is annual)
- one-time funding

Some participants noted that learners often experience significant financial challenges while trying to complete a program and cannot afford expenses associated with being students (childcare, travel, lost income). There is currently a strong emphasis on outcomes or results, while even the funders agree that there must be more focus on ongoing progress. The funders indicate that they are becoming more focused and that they want to see the impact of the programs.

*“Foundational learners often need more resources (e.g. increased volunteers, decreased teacher/student ratio) as their needs are more complex and they are experiencing more barriers.”*

***Some of the less frequently identified trends are listed below.***

- A need for **more collaboration** between programs, organizations and instructors. This means sharing lessons learned, staff training opportunities, projects managed across organizations, evaluation and where there are open seats for programs.
- **Better promotion** from several perspectives: provide education on foundational learning to the public, employers, funders, learners and instructors. Use alternative means to reach potential learners like social media or through the learner's networks.
- Use **meaningful measurement and evaluation**. Define success and develop expertise on evaluation (internal resource are preferred, but there is potential for sharing between organizations). There were many contributors who think success measurements should be more user-driven.
- The need to **find, retain and continually develop staff**. Provide professional development on instructional design.

***Best Practices and What is Working***

This topic was identified at the Community consultation. Questions about what is working were only asked during the Stakeholder Interviews and Round Tables.

Four key themes emerged:

- **Learned-Centered Programs** including starting the program where the learners are, identifying and addressing the individuals' need, having learners participate in setting learning goals and evaluating success, and being culturally sensitive. Programs need the flexibility to adapt programming to meet learner needs.
- **Competent, well trained staff** with the knowledge and capability to take a learner centred approach.
- **Holistic approaches** with wrap-around services that provide various learner support systems like building the emotional and mental health, peer support and mentors.
- **Establish rapport with learners**, with a focus on building trust. This may involve having an inviting environment, being approachable and providing learner recognition.

Many other specific strategies were seen to be working well or would contribute to overall success in the provision of services.

## ***Individual Learners***

Learners and potential learners were interviewed both as individuals and in groups and were asked about their own situations. They were approached directly as well as through organizations. Even though they were asked different questions, their responses echoed the same themes as the other stakeholders' responses.

Interview questions were centred on the learners' personal circumstances and experiences. Individuals' responses reflected the themes of learner complexity and a desire for learner-centred programming. They also showed preference for holistic, supportive programming that was inviting and accessible with capable and friendly staff. Many identified that the cost of learning can hold them back, especially when basic needs had not yet been met (e.g. couldn't take classes because they needed to work to buy food).

## ***Observations and Conclusions***

The interviews and group discussions demonstrated a deep commitment and dedication to adult foundational learning in our community. Funders and practitioners were open, honest and provided extensive information. Here are a few observations that do not directly relate to questions.

- Many of the funding gaps relate to program delivery areas such as staff development, flexibility for individual learner needs, research and evaluation, as well as the means to facilitate collaboration.
- Programs are good and getting better. To continue this improvement, innovation and research are needed on how to improve and use adult learning principles, technology, alternative delivery methods and community support networks.
- Service providers are very interested in sharing information, techniques, training opportunities and lessons learned. They only need some help in making this happen.
- Funders want to know more and participate in non-funding related activities like conferences and community tables related to foundational adult learning.
- Better information collection would help everyone. Little is known about who is not accessing the system or what happens to learners after they complete programs. The demographics collected are not always the same across organizations and there is no single point where city-wide information is compiled. Without this information or longitudinal studies, it is difficult to demonstrate the long-term impact of any program or funding stream.
- Calgary Learns already plays several roles in the community. However, needs assessment participants want Calgary Learns to take a bigger role in areas like promoting collaboration, initiating more networking opportunities, facilitating program and professional development, as well as continuing as a model funder. Calgary Learns will have to decide what priority to give to these roles and whether to fundraise or apply funding to any of these areas.

## **Moving Forward**

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There are many possible actions that might be taken to address or build on the information gathered throughout this assessment. The actions are categorized based on the best practices identified. The following suggestions are for Calgary Learns to act on or to initiate.

### ***Learned-Centered Programs***

- Support program development opportunities (e.g. continue IFL type program) and services that contribute to holistic delivery of programs (e.g. transportation, childcare).
- Work with funders, instructors and learners to determine what success looks like and the capacity building needed to achieve this.
- Consider program funding priority to organizations that can demonstrate effective holistic, learner-centered delivery and collaborative approaches.

### ***Building the Capacity of the Foundational Learning Community***

- Consider supporting opportunities other than direct program delivery.
- Professional development in areas like learner-centered program design and delivery.
- Seminars for the discussion of measurement and evaluation.
- Facilitate, encourage and support the collaboration of service providers in areas like: sharing lessons learned; distributing information on services, space and resources; and staff development training.
- Provide or expedite opportunities for funders to meet and discuss various topics and for them to participate in non-funding related seminars and development sessions.

### ***Other***

- Encourage, facilitate and take a more active role in promoting adult foundational learning.
- Work with other organizations such as the United Way and FCSS to accumulate demographic and geographical information for Calgary on adult foundational learning needs and resources. This information should also assist in identifying who is not accessing the system.
- Review Calgary Learns' role to ensure that it continues to support and meet the needs of Calgary while being consistent with its own vision and mission.

## NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In order to assess the needs of foundational learners in our community Calgary Learns started with the engagement of an advisory committee which included foundational learning leaders in funding, community development, literacy and essential skills, and Calgary Learns Board Members. This group provided input and gave suggestions on how to enhance the process.

The process has involved five stages, including:

### ***Community Consultation***

On June 6<sup>th</sup>, we consulted with 50 community members at our community consultation. This group provided extensive input to our questions through small group discussions. Invitees were provided the opportunity to answer a brief survey prior to the consultation as well.

### ***Stakeholder Interviews (Leaders in the field)***

Afterwards, similar questions were posed to 19 key stakeholders in our community in one-on-one interviews (and one group interview). These key stakeholders were strategically chosen to bring a voice to the various groups of learners and types of programs often at the foundational (i.e. basic) level of learning. These groups included people working in the justice system, poverty, seniors, immigrants, employment training, Aboriginal and literacy learners.

### ***Learner Interviews***

Learners were also interviewed in both one-on-one and group formats. They were asked to share their experiences and perspectives.

### ***Round Tables***

Calgary Learns hosted three round table discussions with stakeholders with content expertise to ensure that the data captured to date was accurate, as well as seek further input. These tables are topic based and included:

- Funders
- Leaders serving foundational level learners in essential skills (including literacy)
- Leaders serving immigrants

### ***Related Articles and Research***

Calgary Learns reviewed number of current articles and reports to ensure that our findings were in line with current trends in the field.

## SUMMARY OF INPUT PROVIDED

The “Summary of What We Heard” provides the distillation and highlights of the information gathered in the report. The information below provides a detailed breakdown of all of the information gathered at each stage throughout the process.

### Community Consultation

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The invitation to the consultation included a survey with the question “What do you see as the top challenges for serving foundational learners in Calgary?” The responses provided a total of 86 comments. Of these:

- 31.4% (27) identified funding practices as a challenge covering amount of funding, conditions on funding and lack of funding for operations and course development
- 23.3% (20) see the complexity of the learner as a challenge. This includes the variety of disabilities, cultural differences, different life situations and learner demands.
- 8.1% (7) want more collaboration between programs, organizations and instructors.
- 8.1% (7) identified taking a holistic approach as a challenge. This included things like lack of childcare, transportation, balance between job and learning or other stresses based on life and family situation.
- 7% (6) indicated being learner centered as a challenge (treating learners as individuals, being able to provide individual instruction when required, and providing alternative learning techniques when required). The same number also saw recruiting, developing and retaining qualified staff as a challenge.
- The remaining 15.1% (13) mentioned a variety of other challenges including a need for better promotion of programs that reaches learners, improved accessibility to programs and institutions, better ways to measure success and a sense of competition between programs pursuing funding.

The Community Consultation in June of 2013 was attended by 50 educators representing 32 organizations. Facilitated small groups were asked the following questions and their responses were summarized below.

1. What foundational learning assets exist in Calgary?

The session produced an extensive list of organizations, people, resources and programs and this list was added to throughout the rest of the research. The information collected can be found in appendix 1.

2. What are the trends and needs that you have been experiencing in foundational learning in Calgary?

There were 173 responses to this question.

- 16.2% (28 responses) identified things related to the complexity of the client situation including characteristics of various learners, challenges with assessments and the movement of learners from program to program.
- 15% (26) addressed the trend and need for increased learner centered instruction to accommodate the increasing diversity of learner needs.
- 13.9% (24) identify the importance of taking a holistic approach to working with the

learner and addressing things like support networks, self-esteem and other non-technical concerns.

- 12.1% (21) identified various funding trends and challenges.
- 8.7% (15) brought up accessibility issues from the individual and system perspectives.
- 6.9 % (12) responses discussed the importance of having and developing well trained staff.
- 6.4% (11) raised the general situation in Calgary (attitudes and environment) and the interrelationship of skills like the relationship between language, communications and self-management skills.
- 14.5% (25) addressed the significance of collaboration between instructors and service providers in all aspects of foundational learning; promotion and public education related to foundational learning; better and more consistent ways of measuring success; research requirements and priorities; as well as the capacity of the system to address increasing demand and for services by learners that are presently more complex challenges to the service providers.

3. What information would be beneficial to your organization from a Foundational Learning Needs Assessment?

There were 79 responses to this question. Almost all of them (71) fell into the following five groups:

- aspects of collaboration between programs;
- specific demographic and quantitative information on learners, trends and programs;
- resources and information related to programs, tools and professionals working in the area;
- information on funding options and ways to gain support for programs;
- techniques for working with learners or within specific instructional areas.

4. What do we need to ask as part of the needs assessment?

Eighty seven (87) responses were collected for this question. They include: questions for learners, educators and funders to determine goals, challenges and rationales. They asked for a list of resources, service providers and many questions to explore learners' situation and motivations. Participants also asked for demographic, systemic and capacity information.

5. Who should we ask about the assets and needs for adult foundational learning in Calgary?

Participants provided 75 ideas consisting of various organizations, names of individuals, roles (e.g. MLAs), and groups (e.g. learners, educators and support workers). Advocacy groups and government departments were also identified.

6. How can we encourage the participation of adult learners in the assessment?

We received more than one hundred suggestions for ways to include learners in our process. They ranged from collaborating with other organizations to giving gift cards to incorporating the interviews into class time. Many of these suggestions were used when we approached learners directly and indirectly.

## Stakeholder Interviews

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During June to October timeframe, 19 key stakeholders in our community were consulted. The questions and their summarized responses follow.

1. How do you define foundational learning?

The results are not included here but tend to reflect differences in perspectives based on the individual's involvement in the field. The term "foundational learning" does cause some confusion. One participant pointed out it is more a term for government policy rather than practitioners and learners.

2. What are the key needs and trends in foundational learning that you are witnessing? (119 different responses)

- Almost one quarter (24.1%) of the responses were related to the complexity of the client situation. This included everything from how each population varies to how even within a population the individual circumstances and situation can be different. Another cited challenge was that barriers were not identified until the program/class began.
- One in five (20.7%) of the responses for this question talked about the importance and challenges related to the interrelationship of skills. This not only included language and literacy but also other essential and soft skills. For example, in order to reach the goal of employment, many interrelated skills are necessary to ensure long term success. Often it is the "soft skills" of working with others, problem solving and communications that may be more important.
- The third most common theme (17.2%) in responses related to attitudes and our social environment. Some of the issues addressed were stigma related to mental health issues, coming out of the correctional system, and Aboriginal participation in the educational system (attitudes from all perspectives). Also included in this theme were systemic issues like over complicated application forms, high school drop-out rates (clients of the future) and the challenges of serving Calgarians who are on the "have not" side of the increasing gap between the "have's" and "have not's".
- About one in seven responses (13.8%) indicated that adequate funding and resources is a growing challenge especially in retaining good staff. Some mentioned the constraints funders place on their support and others indicated that the results funders support do not adequately break down the barriers to developing long term success (e.g. employment focus without all essential skills supported). Some participants noted that learners often experience significant financial challenges while trying to complete a program and cannot afford expenses associated with being students (childcare, travel, lost income).
- Other important issues were closely related to the ones already mentioned. 11.2% of the responses advocated taking a holistic approach and 9.5% recommended being client centred. Many comments related to the importance of developing and supporting more than skills. It is at least as important to build self-confidence, self-esteem and foster learner support systems (peers, family, or community). As for being learner centred, most of the emphasis was related to adult learning principles and the need to accommodate and adapt to individual learning needs and goals.

3. We shared a list of Calgary's foundational learning assets that were provided at the Community consultation and asked if any were any missing.

Suggestions were added to the existing list. An additional comment was made to include a short descriptor for each asset. The information collected can be found in appendix 1.

4. Foundational learners do not always self-identify. Who isn't accessing the system? Who should be?

There were 20 responses to this question and a number of broad groups were identified such as seniors, men in the workplace, women, children, youth, high school drop-outs, the low literate, those confused by the system and those leaving the corrections system. Several responses identified the most marginalized as those who do not access or navigate "the system".

5. What do you see as the best practices for working with foundational learners?

This question had 60 responses:

- More than half (31, 51.7%) indicated that learner centred programming was a best practice. Specific points related to starting the program where the learner was, identifying and addressing individual need, cultural sensitivity and learner participation in setting learning goals and evaluating success.
- One fifth that number (6 or 10%) indicated well trained staff and taking a holistic approach to learners were best practices. Some of the staff training comments related to having the knowledge and capability to take a learner centred approach. The comments on being holistic primarily raised the need for various learner support systems like building the emotional side, peer support and mentors. Other less frequently identified best practices were: being approachable, adaptable programming, focus on building trust, providing learner recognition, collaboration and having enough resources.

6. What does success look like for a foundational learner and how is it best measured? (37 responses)

- Over fifty percent of the responses (18) indicated that success measurement should be user driven.
- Almost 18% (7) suggested more traditional measures such as outcomes, quantitative or qualitative measures.
- Other less frequently identified measure include: "aha" moments of understanding, measure group progress, specific actions or citizen engagement. One response suggested employment and one other said it was not measurable.

7. What capacity building support is needed in foundational learning?

There were 29 responses to this question:

- 12 of them identified training as a need. Topics for training were: assessments, cultural competency, leadership, essential skills, instructional design, measurement, evaluation, and teaching techniques.
- Another 5 responses indicated a need for increased coordination in collaboration, inter-organizational collaboration and sharing resources or knowledge.
- Technology was also identified and 6 other topics were mentioned once.

8. Where do you see Calgary Learns' role?

- One third of the responses to this question (13 of 39) saw Calgary Learns' primary role as a promoter of collaboration between agencies and between funders; raising the profile of foundational learning; and improved accessibility and diversity awareness.
- Another 13 responses identified networking as a key role for Calgary Learns. Specifically mentioned were opportunities to dialogue with colleagues, discuss issues of foundational learning and community consultations.
- The final third of responses were split almost evenly between being a model funder (7) and facilitating program development (6). Suggestions for modeling were staying grounded and engaged; continue funding; and cooperating with other funders. Development ideas related to facilitating program accessibility, offering sessions on how to fundraise and doing needs assessment as well as some professional development sessions.

9. Where do learners go after they complete the programs?

Additional education and disappearing into the community were the only answers that did not directly relate to employment. As for the kinds of work, 3 of 7 responses indicated work in fast foods, and construction. Manufacturing, services and special placement organization were each mentioned once.

10. Do you have any specific suggestions about how we can get learners involved in this assessment?

Fourteen suggestions were provided and covered specific professionals or organizations to talk to, academic research, offering gift/coffee cards to participants, and working through service providers.

11. Other Notes/Can you suggest other Contacts:

Several additional names of organizations and individuals were suggested as additional contacts for the needs assessment process.

Other comments included: keep innovation funding, summarize and share this information with the community, avoid using labels to describe learners, use description of different types of people in foundational learning.

## **Learner Interviews**

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Learners and some potential learners were interviewed as individuals and in groups. They were approached directly as well as through organizations. The questions they were asked and their responses are summarized below.

1. What are your goals?

Of the twenty-five (25) responses received, 10 related to personal development like being able to talk to people or use a computer; 6 identified social goals (meeting people, interacting, having fun); 4 wanted to learn to improve their employment chances; 2 identified educational goals and 3 were miscellaneous (no goals, to forget my worries, and not to be judged)

2. What would help you to learn? What supports?

There were 17 responses that identified the following: structured and encouraging support system; financial support or at least free tuition; alternative instruction or other ways of accommodating learner needs (i.e. e-learning, self-paced, resources for the illiterate); and ways of improving or leveraging motivation like career planning.

3. What would hinder you from learning?

More than half of the 20 responses collected indicated the learner's personal situation was the barrier. This included family pressures, health, not having a career goal and living conditions. Other obstacles identified were conflict between activities (group session, school, work, treatment, etc.) and system concerns like the intimidation of the larger schools, child care and lack of transportation.

4. How would you want your success / success of the program to be measured?

Seven of the eleven responses provided indicated that success should be meeting the learner's self-determined needs, 2 suggested employment as the goal, one said achieving the preset target and the other response said attendance should be the measure of success.

5. Is there something you really want to learn, but haven't seen a course available?

All 8 responses collected were all different and varied from gardening to career goals and English language training.

6. How do you think it will impact your life? Your family? Peoples' perception?

The 8 responses were all different again and covered several personal issues, self-confidence and employment.

7. Do you know people who are not accessing this program, but should? Why not?

There were only two responses that answered this question. The first identified people who had financial barriers and the second one said he knew people who need English language training but did not know why they did not pursue it.

## Round Tables

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Three round table sessions were held. The first with 5 funding organizations, the second with 6 immigrant serving organizations, and the third with 6 organizations that work with literacy and essential skills. Each participant received a summary of the results found to date and the discussion questions for their round table.

## Funders questions and responses

1. Are we missing any trends? What trends are you seeing?

- There needs to be more focus on progress not just results
- Need to build capability/capacity within the communities
- Organizations from outside of Calgary are applying to provide programs in Calgary
- There are expectations for more outcomes

- Would like to see more innovation related to collective/collaborative impact
  - Increasing expectation that organizations are 'ready, willing and able' to do the work
  - Difficult to understand the needs
  - More small organizations struggle than big ones
2. As Funders, where do we intersect or overlap?
    - Want overlap to be collaborative and intentional, there is seldom enough funding in any area
    - Funders have discussions at high levels before they set their priorities
    - Two current gaps are prevention and adult literacy
  3. Is there potential to work together to increase adult Calgarians' foundational skills?
    - We are doing that today but would like more opportunities like this
    - Would like to participate in general networking activities, not funding focused
    - A conference related to these areas would be useful
    - We should find ways to further increase communications

### ***Immigrant serving leaders questions and responses***

1. What are the trends impacting foundational learning?
  - A challenge to assess low literacy
  - Funders often want broad measures, need to use impact
  - Youth may navigate the system for their parents or support them through the process
  - Difficult to get learners engaged
  - The need to educate stakeholders, funders, learners and instructors
  - Program is directly tied to funding support – need more flexibility
  - We need expertise / expert to help with evaluation (better if an internal resource but could be shared, may be a process)
  - Many gaps along the essential skill continuum – complexity of literacy
2. What is working well now?
  - The holistic approach with wrap around services and offering support
  - Relying on volunteers and counselors for referrals
  - Having qualified interpreters
  - Having an inviting environment
  - A growing network of services – increases learner engagement
  - Smaller classes
  - Non-central program delivery (near the learners' homes)
  - Use the family literacy model and involve youth
  - Using tutors to assess needs or identify barriers
3. How can we do more of this?
  - Provide more money
  - Family literacy
  - Training and research

- Increase community engagement
  - Support experiments / innovation
  - More flexibility within contract
  - Collaboration, shared money: resources, programs, space, partnerships
  - Support systematic and coordinated collaboration
  - Provide more opportunity to sharing program information
  - Find ways to share Lessons learned (what worked and what didn't)
  - Focus on process, e.g. goal setting, how to learn (Learners, practitioners)
  - More structured opportunities to exchange ideas
4. What else do we need to do?
- Digital literacy
  - Leverage technology (social media, online, digital literacy)
  - Train learners, instructors, designers, stakeholders
  - Professional development

### ***Leaders in literacy and essential skills questions and responses***

1. What are the trends impacting foundational learning?
  - Learning disabilities are difficult to address
  - Organizations who focus on financial literacy or other “close to employment skills” are the ones who get money.
  - Public does not know/understand the issue.
  - Promotion / advocacy
  - Learner does not know their challenges
  - Increasing interest in assessment by practitioner / learner
  - Need emphasis on literacy link with poverty
  - The economy – low skilled are those laid off during poor economic times
  - Business’ need more entry level workers.
  - Draws from diversity, new culture magnifies some challenges
  - Employers do not understand these issues – need more education
  - Simply bringing in new workers from other countries contributes to the problems and challenges, it does not resolve them
  - The challenge of well educated, but poor English and non-transferable training
  - Cultural awareness = ongoing and growing trend
2. What is working well now?
  - Good collaboration between service providers
  - Improved focus on niche needs and services
  - Better referrals
  - Better focused funding
  - Better Alberta Human Services coordination
  - Federal Government has low visibility
  - Essential skills are well coordinated

- Better sequence of development “do-review-develop-share”
3. How can we do more of this?
- We still need money
  - Previous PD Funding came from Innovation and Advanced Education + Price Waterhouse Cooper
  - Professional development for free / sponsored
  - Internal training – still need money
  - Stop operating in a mentality of poverty
  - Funders have capped support need them to uncap
  - “In kind” training – delivered in exchange between organizations to share internal expertise
  - Shared pool of staff development sessions
  - Organizations culture for sharing – think broader
  - Need a training session consortium
  - List options open to the sector
  - Share needs
  - Coordinate a project of cross-over training
  - Put information on Inform AB -> Calgary Learns to provide shepherding
4. What else do we need to do?
- Holistic approaches for learners, staff and organizations

## Related Articles, Reports and Research

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There is limited research which addresses the Calgary context specifically. Statistics Canada, the Calgary Immigrant Local Partnership, United Way and The City of Calgary offer applicable reports and useful demographic information. This statistical information confirms the breadth and depth of the need. Increasing populations of aboriginals, immigrants and seniors in Calgary, groups that are disproportionately working at foundational levels, point to the growing need for foundational learning opportunities for adults. Adult education is a definite piece of local initiatives such as the Calgary Urban Aboriginal Initiative, Calgary Local Immigration Partnership, Calgary Poverty Initiative and Federation of Calgary Communities which are designed to better serve Calgarians.

Within the Alberta context, the Government of Alberta's *Living Literacy: A Literacy Framework for Alberta's Next Generation Economy* echoes many of the trends and best practices that stakeholders highlighted in our assessment. The values statements in this Government document state that literacy policies, programs and services:

- Are learner-centred and responsive to the strengths, abilities and needs of individuals
- Acknowledge and value the language, culture, spirituality and traditions of learners, families and communities
- Are delivered through collaborative partnerships
- Support innovation and excellence in teaching and learning
- Are based on shared responsibility and accountability
- Are developed and implemented through open, honest, consistent and transparent processes

To support this literacy document and its goal to “coordinate and collaborate with...partners to improve the literacy skills of Albertans”, NorQuest College and Literacy Alberta received funding and have drafted a Promising Practices Framework. They are in the consultation stage of this project as we finalize our needs assessment. Their draft document also echoes many of the best practices identified by our stakeholders: responding to practice needs and goals of learners, encouraging and supporting learners and staff to critically reflect about program and service practices as part of ongoing evaluation, coordinating delivery of programs and services in the community and building respectful and trustworthy relationships. The document also highlights the need to provide staff and volunteers with on-going training and professional development (Literacy Alberta and NorQuest College, 2013).

Further provincial trends identified in the Alberta's 2013 Social Policy Framework are consistent with our findings. Community pressures to create this Framework, identified below, are strongly related to the identified challenges for adults with foundational level skills in our assessment.

- Complexity: The needs of individuals are becoming increasingly complex as the province's population becomes more diverse. The system of supports required to serve

these individuals have similarly grown in size and complexity, making it difficult for many Albertans to navigate and access services.

- **Growing Gap:** The gap between the rich and poor is growing in Alberta, and certain populations are facing challenges resulting from this inequality.
- **Changing Expectations:** Rapid changes in information technologies have created expectations that services should be portable, user-driven and simple to administer.
- **Sustainability Challenges:** Significant demographic changes and challenges to sustainability are emerging as a result of population growth, changing immigration patterns, and an aging baby boomer generation. These challenges are placing pressure on the cost, diversity, and types of services required by Albertans.

Another key piece of research that was just being released at the end of this needs assessment is the Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) results. At this early stage both the OECD (international results) and Statistics Canada set a cautionary tone regarding “interpreting” the results. Nevertheless, the Centre for Literacy reported that the findings, as expected, are very rich. While some results were predictable (i.e. higher education is associated with greater skills), others were surprising and potentially of concern (i.e. literacy and numeracy for those aged 16-24 were lower than for those aged 25-34). Results for minority-language groups and aboriginal populations also triggered new questions. Canada’s distribution of proficiency levels of population aged 16 to 65 compared with the average as follows:

	Below Level 1	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4/5
Average	3.3%	12.1%	33.6%	38.9%	12.1%
Canada	3.8%	12.7%	32%	37.6%	13.9%

*Source from www.statcan.gc.ca*

Successful strategies for adult education include flexible or modularized instruction, free adult education, especially for the most disadvantaged, with support for income replacement, transportation, and childcare. Other critical supports include easy-to-find information about lifelong learning opportunities and encouraging employers to create literacy rich jobs where workers can use and practice their skills (Hayes). Further analysis of the data will help direct focus for the future, design potential policies and hopefully, inject further investment into foundational adult learning.

In much of the recent Canadian research which followed the previous International Adult Literacy Life Skills Survey (IALLS), the focus emphasized the economic value of literacy. Economist T. Scott Murray calculated that Canada would boost its economy by 32 billion dollars by raising the literacy rates by 1%. His research is cited frequently and the enhanced economics of investing in low literate learners to maximize economic returns is the common message (Canadian Literacy and Learning Network & Canada’s Public Forum, Harwood, Murray & Shillington, 2011, Murray & Shillington, 2012). With funding being one of the challenges organizations are facing in Calgary, this message may resonate for funders and result in a greater investment in foundational learning programs. The question is whether this focus may further drive employment focused funding.

Effective measurement and evaluation techniques generated much conversation with our stakeholders including funders. This is also reflected in the research. Jackson and Schaetti, as part of Bow Valley College's Literacy and Essential Skills: Learner Progression Measures Project, have undertaken a comprehensive literature review of measurement and assessment in adult literacy and essential skills. They point out that "there are as many notions of success as there are purposes for literacy, and no simple way to define progress". Formative assessment is often recommended as the most appropriate way to measure progress in adult literacy programs. However, the capacity of programs can be an issue for using this assessment effectively and practitioner training in activities such as demonstration, observation, feedback and dialogue is necessary. Standardized assessment is an integral part of many adult literacy and essential skills although many practitioners, especially those who view literacy as a complex social practice, view this as problematic (Jackson & Schaetti). There needs to be a well developed process for learner assessment and a more coordinated system so learners can move between programs and advance into further education (Harwood)

Stephen Reder presented interesting research on what should be measured in adult literacy programs. He followed a select group of adults for nine years in the Longitudinal Study of Adult Learning (LSAL) and tracked their literacy abilities, patterns of participation in literacy training and education, and life experience that we associated with literacy development. He found no relationships between proficiency change and participation in adult basic skills programs. The data instead showed that students who were taught literacy practices using authentic materials (e.g. from daily life) reported greater changes in their literacy practices compared to students from programs not centered around authentic literacy practices. Literacy, for most of these adults, continued to develop throughout adult life and a majority of the adults engaged in self-study. Reder makes a case for measuring adult literacy practices as opposed to proficiencies. (Reder, Jackson & Schaetti).

Calgary's changing demographics are a reflection of Canada's population growth which is largely driven by First Nations, Métis, Inuit and immigration from other countries. The *Living Literacy* framework acknowledges "the importance of literacy actions taking into account the cultures and realities of communities, and circumstances of populations such as First Nations, Métis and Inuit" (Government of Alberta, 2009). A survey of Aboriginal people in Calgary identified Education as a top priority and as an enduring aspiration for the next generations of Aboriginal people (EnviroNics 2012). Aboriginal educators have noticed success when using culturally relevant programming that meets community need (Jackson & Schaetti).

Literacy is recognized as a complex, lifelong process that brings personal, social, and economic benefits to everyone. Adult skills development and upgrading can serve to bolster adults' capacity to access further learning, compete for better jobs, and contribute to the social, economic and cultural development of their communities. (Council of Ministers of Education, 2012). With skills becoming the global currency of 21st century, we fear that lack of progress in the field of lifelong learning threatens to undermine the development of Canada's greatest asset-the potential of our people (CCLN 2010).

## **Advisory Committee Members**

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Brian Larson, Calgary Learns Board Member

Lorene Anderson, Calgary Learns Board Member

Evelyn Tait, Alberta Human Services

Keith Seel, Bow Valley College

Berniece Gowan, Consultant (Alberta Enterprise and Advance Education and later Bow Valley College)

Lisa Caton, Momentum

Cesar Cala, United Way of Calgary and Area

## **Stakeholders Interviewed**

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Audrey Gardner, Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning, Bow Valley College

Beba Svirig, Calgary Immigrant Women's Association

Biljana Tratnik, Immigrant Services Calgary (group interview)

Cam Stewart, Alberta Human Rights Commission

Carolyn Arrell, Bishop O'Byrne Housing for Seniors Association

Christy Morgan, Calgary Urban Aboriginal Initiative

Cindy Messaros, Alberta Workplace Essential Skills

Derek Cook, Calgary Poverty Initiative

DeVera Parkinson, EmployMe Calgary

Elaine Yost, Options

Evelyn Tait, Alberta Human Services

Franco Savoia, Vibrant Communities Calgary

Iris Spurrell, Calgary Family Services

Krystyna Biel, Immigrant Services Calgary (group interview)

Leslie McMechan, Calgary John Howard Society

Phil Carlton, UpStart, United Way of Calgary and Area

Roger Hendrickson, Simon House

Terri Peters, Literacy and Essential Skills Consultant, tlp training

Wendy Auger, Immigrant Services Calgary (group interview)

## ORGANIZATIONS THAT PROVIDED INPUT

- Alberta Innovation and Advanced Education
- Alberta Human Rights Commission
- Alberta Human Services
- Alberta Network for Immigrant Women
- Aspen Family Services
- Bishop O'Byrne Housing for Seniors Association
- Bow Valley College - Centre for Excellence in Foundational Learning
- Calgary Catholic Immigration Society
- Calgary Chinese Community Service Association
- Calgary Drop-In and Rehab Centre
- Calgary Family Services
- Calgary Immigrant Educational Society
- Calgary Local Immigrant Partnership
- Calgary Immigrant Women's Association
- Calgary John Howard Society
- Calgary Learns
- Calgary Poverty Reduction Initiative
- Calgary Public Library
- Calgary Urban Aboriginal Initiative
- Campus Alberta Connections, EAE
- Canadian Mental Health Assoc - Calgary
- CanLearn Society
- Catholic Family Service
- Centre for Newcomers
- Community Learning Network
- Deaf and Hard of Hearing Society
- EmployMe Calgary
- ESL Cooperative
- Families Matter Society
- Family and Community Support Services (FCSS)
- Further Education Society (FESA)
- Immigrant Services Calgary
- Independent Consultant
- Individuals from 'Cash Corner'
- Insideout Theatre
- Literacy Alberta
- Literacy for Life Foundation
- Momentum
- Mount Royal University
- Needs Assessment consultant
- Office of Workplace and Essential Skills
- Options
- Parent Support Association
- Poverty Talks
- RaiDo Dynamics
- Rocky View Schools Community Learning
- Simon House
- St. Mary's University College
- Taber and District Community Adult Learning
- TD Canada Trust
- tlp training
- The Calgary Foundation
- Transitional Vocational Program
- United Way of Calgary and Area
- University of Calgary
- UpStart at United Way of Calgary and Area
- Vibrant Communities Calgary
- YWCA of Calgary
- Vecova

## Appendix 1 – FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING ASSETS IN CALGARY

### Programs

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\* program funded by Calgary Learns in 2013

#### ***Adult Basic Literacy***

##### **\* Adult Basic Literacy Education (ABLE) – Bow Valley College**

ABLE is a program where adults with disabilities work alongside their non-disabled peers. Learners work on reading, writing and spelling within modules such as voting, looking for work, health and nutrition.

##### **\* Family Literacy Program - Further Education Society of Alberta**

This program presents parenting and literacy information in a strengths-based, competency-building, culturally sensitive manner through four program models: Literacy and Parenting Skills (LAPS), Parent Child Mother Goose, Homespun and Books for Babies/ Jumpstart.

##### **Home institute for parents of preschool youngsters (HIPPY) - CIWA**

The program provides immigrant women and their families support with literacy skills to prepare their preschool aged children for school.

##### **\* Learning Opportunities Program - Calgary John Howard Society**

This program provides foundational learning through literacy instruction to two learner populations: (1) Individuals incarcerated at the Calgary Remand Centre through weekly one-on-one literacy sessions and (2) At-risk individuals living in the community through weekly 'drop-in' group sessions offered in partnership with Inn from the Cold.

##### **\* Lifeline to Literacy – Bow Valley College**

This program meets the needs of adult students who are seeking to improve their emerging literacy skills. The program is for those whose reading, writing and math skills are below the grade seven level.

##### **Never Too Late – Catholic Family Service**

This program supports adults living in selected Northwest communities who want to complete their Grade 12 Equivalency Diploma (GED).

##### **\* Speech-Assisted Reading and Writing – Bow Valley College**

SARAW is an adult literacy program that teaches basic reading, writing and math skills to adults with physical and/or developmental disabilities. It is designed for adults reading at below grade seven. Each learner works one-on-one with a tutor in a special classroom equipped with assistive technology.

##### **Taking Shelter with Literacy (TSWL) – Literacy Alberta**

TSWL aims to help build safer families, homes and communities through our program of training, advice and resources. The TSWL project is in partnership with Further Education Society of Alberta (FESA).

### **\*Transitional Vocational Program - Mount Royal University**

This program supports adults with developmental disabilities to achieve their literacy and numeracy learning goals. An underlying goal of the program is to foster a positive environment whereby students enhance their self-esteem, social skill development, and appreciation of lifelong learning.

### **\*Words to Success - Calgary John Howard Society**

This program provides basic literacy skills training for selected individuals who are incarcerated at the Calgary Correctional Centre (CCC). The goals of the program are that learners improve literacy skills and gain confidence to continue literacy learning.

## ***Other Adult Programs with Integrated Essential Skills***

### **\*Citizenship Learning Project - Immigrant Services Calgary**

This program provides learning opportunities for immigrants who plan to apply for Canadian citizenship. The program (1) helps equip learners for the Citizenship Test and (2) empowers learners with the knowledge, confidence and initiative necessary to participate fully in Canadian society as both beneficiaries and contributors.

### **\*Community-Based Family Education - Families Matter Society**

This program is comprised of approximately 40 parenting workshops, courses, seminars and groups covering a diverse range of topics and skill areas to meet the needs of a broad range of human developmental stages and family life transitions.

### **Empowerment Seminars - Calgary Family Services**

These seminars will develop awareness of your inner potential. The skills learned will help you feel more independent and self-directed with greater influence in your family and community.

### **\*Family-focused Sign Language Instruction - Deaf & Hard of Hearing Society**

This program allows adults to learn American Sign Language, strengthening their capacity to interact positively and communicate in a meaningful way.

### **\*Inside Out Integrated Theatre - Association of Inside Out Integrated Theatre Project**

This provides accessible, learner-centred theatre training opportunities for adults with disabilities. The objective is to support participants in the development of communication and learning opportunities.

### **\*Integrated Community Kitchen - Calgary SCOPE Society**

This program provides a learning environment for individuals with dual diagnosis developmental disabilities on AISH. The goal is to develop skills in meal planning, meal preparation, kitchen hygiene and safe food handling. The program provides them with low cost healthy meals each month.

### **\*Peer Options Workshops - Canadian Mental Health Association**

This program provides a guided foundational learning continuum for individuals with mental disorders in three phases. (1) the Art of Friendship: a nine week psycho-educational workshop that introduces the essential skills of interpersonal relationship building; (2) the weekly Circle of Friends: a peer support group where they practice and enhance their acquired skills; (3) the

final phase of this learning continuum facilitates learners wanting to give back to their community by becoming Peer Mentor Volunteers.

#### **Ready 4 Learning - Calgary Family Services and United Way**

Ready 4 Learning's goal is to help strengthen family resiliency in the communities of Bowness, Montgomery and Greenwood Village. They support parents in their role as a child's first and most important teacher, giving their children the tools to succeed in learning and in life.

#### **Skills for Life – Canadian Mental Health**

This workshop is designed to help participants understand more about issues that impact their mental health.

### ***Employability Enhancement And Training Programs***

#### **\*Business Development for Foundational Learners - Momentum**

This package of programs consists of Business Basics and ABCs of Small Business. These programs are positioned for individuals requiring scaled-down business concepts for their simple business models.

#### **\*Computer Combo Program - Calgary Immigrant Educational Society**

This program is comprised of two courses: Computer Technology Made Practical and MS Word & Excel. These courses teach computer skill and knowledge to economically disadvantaged adults in the greater Forest Lawn area.

#### **\*Computer Training for Employment - Calgary Catholic Immigration Society**

This program provides low-cost instruction to low-income learners who wish to strengthen their competitiveness in the job market by enhancing their computer and employability skills. The courses range from basic foundational skills to more advanced learning.

#### **\*Digital Literacy in the Community - Calgary Public Library**

Using a mobile technology lab, this program takes the Library's computer training programs "on the road" to key partner agencies that serve low-income foundational learners. Workshop topics range from basic computing to social media and job search.

#### **\*Learning Education Enhancement Program - Calgary John Howard Society**

LEEP is a 3-week employment program to provide ex-offenders and other disadvantaged individuals with the tools needed to succeed in the workforce. LEEP offers (1) employment preparation skills training, (2) industry ticket training, (3) financial literacy training, and (4) basic level Alternatives to Violence (AVP) training.

### ***Adult English Language Learning Programs***

For a more complete listing, please check ILVARC's ESL directory:

<http://www.immigrantservicescalgary.ca/sites/default/files/%28final%29%20Sep%202013%20Mar%202014%20ESL%20Directory.pdf>

#### **\*Computer Enhanced ESL Literacy - Bow Valley College**

The aim of this program is twofold: (1) to reach financially barriered adult ELL learners who have low literacy skills and demonstrate a need for further educational opportunities, and (2) to address effective ways of integrating technological skills within adult ELL literacy learning.

**\*English for New Canadians - YWCA of Calgary**

This program provides instruction in practical English communication and basic computer literacy skills to help learners develop and enhance their English language proficiency.

**\*ESL Volunteer Tutor Program - Bow Valley College**

This program provides ELL tutoring in an informal, small group format, focusing on improving learners' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills.

**Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada Program - Citizenship and Immigration Canada**

The LINC Program provides free basic French and English language courses to adult permanent residents.

**\*Pebbles in the Sand - Calgary Immigrant Women's Association**

This ELL Literacy program is for immigrant and refugee women who have very low literacy skills (0 – 7 years of education in their home countries) and face multiple barriers to transition to higher level training and education. The program uses a learner-directed approach called REFLECT.

**\*Stepping Stones: Forward into the Community - Calgary Chinese Community Service Association**

Working with Mandarin, Cantonese and Afghani learners, this unique program consists of small, learner-centered ELL classes for linguistically homogenous learners who have little or no formal education in their first language.

**\*Volunteer ESL Tutor Training Project - Bow Valley College**

The four partners in this program are organizations with long standing ELL volunteer tutor programs: Bow Valley College, YWCA, Calgary Catholic Immigration Society and the Calgary Public Library. Through their collaboration, these partners identify and address the volunteer ELL training needs in Calgary.

***Aboriginal Programs***

**Aboriginal Friendship Centre of Calgary (AFCC)**

The AFCC is a nonprofit organization with a mandate to provide social, cultural, education and employment services to the Aboriginal peoples within the Calgary Metropolitan area.

**Aboriginal Upgrading Program - Bow Valley College**

Bow Valley College works to meet the needs of Aboriginal learners and helps to ensure their success in school, work and life. Our Aboriginal Upgrading program place emphasis on tradition, culture, and community.

**Chinook Lodge Aboriginal Resource Centre - SAIT**

SAIT Polytechnic opened Chinook Lodge Aboriginal Resource Centre in 2001 to provide a dedicated space to serve the learning, training and personal needs of Aboriginal students. It is a gathering place dedicated to enriching Aboriginal student life as well as promoting cultural education and awareness.

### **Full Circle - United Way**

The Full Circle Team was established in 2010 as part of the Aboriginal Youth and Education Strategy. It is a collaborative of service providers and systems representatives working with UpStart to support Aboriginal youth in Calgary and area to ensure the supports are in place for Aboriginal youth to be involved, engaged and committed to school, do well in school and achieve their educational goals to complete school.

### ***Professional Development***

#### **Calgary Urban Project Society (CUPS) – Literacy Alberta**

LA is working with CUPS, who provide critical services to vulnerable citizens, to develop literacy-friendly services. Using literacy and plain language audits, training and advice, we will work with staff to create clear oral, print and online practices and information.

#### **Essential Skills Field Work – Literacy Alberta**

Increase professional capacity of CALP coordinators and staff to embed essential skills in work with learners, and create more opportunities for learners to be aware of and have access to essential skills training and development.

#### **Facilitating Skills for enhancing self-esteem – Calgary Family Services**

This seminar is open to qualified professionals, particularly counsellors, psychologists and social workers who work with individuals seeking help in the areas of self-esteem and empowerment.

#### **\*Integrating Foundational Learning – Calgary Learns**

Seven organizations were trained on how to include literacy and essential skills in their employability and community issues programs.

#### **New Coordinator Training – Literacy Alberta**

LA teamed up with the Community Learning Network to deliver this training, which includes the Volunteer Tutor Adult Literacy (VTAL) and Community Adult Learning Council (CALC) and Family Literacy coordinators (CFL).

#### **Plain Language Services – Literacy Alberta**

We recognize the important role plain language plays in literacy. We provide audits, training and advice on how you can create clear communications. Our 2010-2011 Annual Report theme was plain language - and it was applied to the design and content.

#### **WorkUp – Literacy Alberta**

In partnership with Alberta Workforce Essential Skills (AWES), LA have trained six experienced facilitators to become Workplace Essential Skills (WES) practitioners. All are currently providing essential skills training to businesses in their home communities.

## Organizations

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Access Calgary	<a href="http://www.calgarytransit.com/accesscalgary.html">www.calgarytransit.com/accesscalgary.html</a>
Alberta Health and Wellness	<a href="http://www.health.alberta.ca">www.health.alberta.ca</a>
Alberta Human Resources	<a href="http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca">www.humanservices.alberta.ca</a>
Aspen – Family Village	<a href="http://www.aspenfamily.org">www.aspenfamily.org</a>
Bow Valley College	<a href="http://www.bowvalleycollege.ca">www.bowvalleycollege.ca</a>
Community Adult Learning Councils (CALC)	<a href="http://www.eae.alberta.ca/apps/councils/councils.asp">www.eae.alberta.ca/apps/councils/councils.asp</a>
Calgary 2012	<a href="http://www.calgary2012.com">www.calgary2012.com</a>
Calgary Catholic Immigrant Services	<a href="http://www.ccis-calgary.ab.ca">www.ccis-calgary.ab.ca</a>
Calgary Chinese Community Service Association	<a href="http://www.cccsa.ca">www.cccsa.ca</a>
Calgary Drop-In & Rehab Centre	<a href="http://www.thedi.ca">www.thedi.ca</a>
Calgary Food Bank	<a href="http://www.calgaryfoodbank.com">www.calgaryfoodbank.com</a>
The Calgary Foundation	<a href="http://www.thecalgaryfoundation.org">www.thecalgaryfoundation.org</a>
Calgary Immigrant Educational Society	<a href="http://www.immigrant-education.ca">www.immigrant-education.ca</a>
Calgary Immigrant Women’s’ Association	<a href="http://www.ciwa-online.com">www.ciwa-online.com</a>
Calgary John Howard Society	<a href="http://www.calgaryjohnhoward.org">www.calgaryjohnhoward.org</a>
Calgary Learns	<a href="http://www.calgarylearns.com">www.calgarylearns.com</a>
Calgary Public Library	<a href="http://www.calgarypubliclibrary.com">www.calgarypubliclibrary.com</a>
CanLearn Society	<a href="http://www.canlearnsociety.ca">www.canlearnsociety.ca</a>
Canadian Mental Health	<a href="http://www.calgary.cmha.ca">www.calgary.cmha.ca</a>
Catholic Family Service	<a href="http://www.cfs-ab.org">www.cfs-ab.org</a>
CCIS	<a href="http://www.ccis-calgary.ab.ca">www.ccis-calgary.ab.ca</a>
Centre for Newcomers	<a href="http://www.centrefornewcomers.ca">www.centrefornewcomers.ca</a>
Chinook Learning Centre	<a href="http://www.chinooklearningservices.com">www.chinooklearningservices.com</a>
City of Calgary	<a href="http://www.calgary.ca">www.calgary.ca</a>
Community Learning Network	<a href="http://www.communitylearning.info">www.communitylearning.info</a>
Fresh Start	<a href="http://www.freshstartrecovery.ca">www.freshstartrecovery.ca</a>
Further Education Society	<a href="http://www.furthered.ca">www.furthered.ca</a>
ILVARC	<a href="http://www.immigrantservicescalgary.ca">www.immigrantservicescalgary.ca</a>
Inside Out Theatre	<a href="http://insideouttheatre.com">insideouttheatre.com</a>
Literacy Alberta	<a href="http://www.literacyalberta.ca">www.literacyalberta.ca</a>
McBride Career Group	<a href="http://www.mcbridecareergroup.com">www.mcbridecareergroup.com</a>
Momentum	<a href="http://www.momentum.org">www.momentum.org</a>
Momo Dance Theatre	<a href="http://www.momodancetheatre.org">www.momodancetheatre.org</a>
Mount Royal University	<a href="http://www.mtroyal.ca">www.mtroyal.ca</a>
The Mustard Seed	<a href="http://www.theseed.ca">www.theseed.ca</a>
Optional Rehabilitation Services (Options)	<a href="http://www.optionsrehab.org">www.optionsrehab.org</a>
Parent Support Association	<a href="http://www.psa.calgary.ab.ca">www.psa.calgary.ab.ca</a>
Parks Canada	<a href="http://www.pc.gc.ca">www.pc.gc.ca</a>
Riel Institute of Education and Learning	<a href="http://www.rielinstitute.com">www.rielinstitute.com</a>
St. Mary’s College University College	<a href="http://www.stmu.ab.ca">www.stmu.ab.ca</a>
Towes	<a href="http://www.towes.com">www.towes.com</a>
U of C	<a href="http://www.ucalgary.ca">www.ucalgary.ca</a>
United Way	<a href="http://www.calgaryunitedway.org">www.calgaryunitedway.org</a>
Vecova	<a href="http://www.vecova.ca">www.vecova.ca</a>
Volunteer Calgary	<a href="http://www.volunteercalgary.ab.ca">www.volunteercalgary.ab.ca</a>
YMCA	<a href="http://www.ymcacalgary.org">www.ymcacalgary.org</a>
YWCA	<a href="http://www.ywcaofcalgary.com">www.ywcaofcalgary.com</a>

## Other Resources

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This list represents an accumulation of resources shared by participants throughout the needs assessment process.

### **Alberta Employment and Immigration - Calgary Region Employment and Training Newsletters**

<http://www.employment.alberta.ca/calgary-dir>

Quarterly newsletters, including information on employment and training programs in Calgary.

### **Alberta Workforce Essential Skills Society (AWES)**

<http://www.awes.ca/>

Since 1989, AWES has been designing and delivering learning solutions in Alberta. Their primary mandate is enabling employees and organizations to excel through essential skills initiatives.

### **All In for Youth - United Way**

<http://www.calgaryunitedway.org/main/our-work/all-in-for-youth>

United Way and its partners launched a ground-breaking initiative that will connect Calgary's youth to the opportunities they need to be successful in school and beyond. The "All In" for Youth initiative is a movement of citizens, companies, organizations and government working together to ensure more youth successfully complete high school and transition to further education, work and adult life.

### **Calgary Association of Lifelong Learners (CALL)**

<http://calgarylifelonglearners.ca/wordpress/>

CALL's mandate is to facilitate lifelong learning for residents of Calgary and area who are 45 years of age and older. Programs and activities are wide-ranging, focusing on arts and culture, society and politics, and health and science.

### **Calgary Chamber of Voluntary Organizations (CCVO)**

<http://www.calgarycvo.org/>

CCVO was established in 2004 to strengthen individual organizations and the sector generally, by building capacity and addressing the larger systemic issues that can ultimately help or hinder their missions. CCVO works to provide leadership on issues broadly affecting the nonprofit/voluntary sector.

### **Calgary Emergency Management Agency Plain Language Advice – Literacy Alberta**

<http://literacyalberta.ca/projects>

CEMA came to us for advice on their new plain language Household Emergency Action Plan publication. Find out how to protect your home and your family in an emergency or disaster.

### **Calgary Family Services**

<http://www.calgaryfamily.org/>

Calgary Family Services develops and implements programs that are holistic and serve the city of Calgary throughout all life cycles. Services are designed to: enhance individual and family relationships; help children reach their full potential; engage older adults in contributing to their communities and assist vulnerable citizens to maintain their dignity and respect. Individuals, families and communities turn to us for support through childhood, adulthood and elderhood.

### **Calgary Public Library**

[http://blog.calgarypubliclibrary.com/blogs/about\\_cpl/pages/cpl-contact-information.aspx](http://blog.calgarypubliclibrary.com/blogs/about_cpl/pages/cpl-contact-information.aspx)

The CPL's mission: To enrich lives and build community by ensuring universal access to resources for information, learning, inspiration and enjoyment.

### **The Canadian Council on Learning (CCL)**

<http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/AboutCCL/index.html>

CCL is an independent, non-profit corporation that promotes and supports research to improve all aspects of learning—across the country and across all walks of life.

### **Canadian Language Benchmarks & Essential Skills**

[http://www.itsessential.ca/itsessential/display\\_page.asp](http://www.itsessential.ca/itsessential/display_page.asp)

A website that matches the Canadian Language Benchmarks to the Workplace Essential Skills and provides background and resources.

### **Community Learning Network (CLN)**

<http://communitylearning.info/>

The CLN is a provincial not-for-profit organization that provides leadership, resources, and connections to Alberta's more than 80 Community Adult Learning Councils (CALCs) The CLN works with Alberta Advanced Education and Technology to enable Councils to address the adult learning needs in the communities they serve.

### **Copian (formerly NALD)**

<http://en.copian.ca/>

Copian, formerly the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD), is a Canadian non-profit registered charity. Their mission is to provide Internet-based literacy and essential skills information and resources in both of Canada's official languages.

### **Employment, Training and Career Services Directory**

<http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/services-near-you/2433.html>

This directory, prepared quarterly, provides an overview of programs and services available in the Calgary Region. The programs and services listed can help Calgarians with (1) making career, employment and training decisions, (2) obtaining assistance in addressing their basic needs and (3) understanding the breadth of supports available in Calgary.

## **Essential Skills Resource Guide - Literacy Alberta**

<http://literacyalberta.ca/sites/default/files/users/litab/Essential%20Skills%20Project%202011%282%29-1.xls>

Literacy Alberta has compiled an extensive list of resources, which can be found in our Essential Skills Resource Guide to help you explore and understand the essential skills.

## **Family Literacy Initiative Fund (FLIF) – Centre for Family Literacy**

[http://www.famlit.ca/programs\\_and\\_projects/projects/flrn.shtml](http://www.famlit.ca/programs_and_projects/projects/flrn.shtml)

Regional Coordinators were contracted to provide training and support in each region and an Aboriginal Family Literacy Coordinator was contracted to work closely with the regions to provide on-going support to Aboriginal programs in Alberta.

## **Grassroots Press**

<http://www.grassrootsbooks.net/ca/>

Meeting the needs of adult literacy & ESL practitioners and students, Grass Roots Press has been publishing and distributing adult literacy materials to over 4000 individuals and organizations across North American since 1997. The company was founded on the belief that the best resources are those developed by literacy educators. From tutor training materials, to landmark research findings, to exceptional student materials.

## **Inform Alberta**

<http://www.informalberta.ca/>

This is an on-line, web-based directory designed to give Alberta residents and service providers access to current information about community, health, and social services in their area.

## **LearningLinks Resource Centre**

[www.learninglinkslibrary.ca](http://www.learninglinkslibrary.ca)

This is home to over 16,000 items on literacy, learning disabilities and attention issues. LearningLinks is a valuable resource for teachers, professionals, parents, and learners. The library is the combined collections of Literacy Alberta and the CanLearn Centre/Calgary Learning Centre. LearningLinks also partners with the University of Calgary Library and Cultural Resources, and Rocky View Schools. They also host collections from the Alberta Workforce Essential Skills and the Centre for Gifted Education.

## **Learning Links**

<http://www.learninglinkslibrary.ca/>

Dedicated to literacy and learning difficulties, this unique library is one of Canada's largest collections of resources on these subjects.

## **Money Matters**

<http://abclifeliteracy.ca/mm/about-money-matters>

This is a free financial literacy and education savings program for adult learners developed by ABC Life Literacy Canada with Founding Sponsor TD Bank Group and the Government of Canada through Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. Money Matters brings volunteer-tutors into community learning centres across Canada to teach numeracy and financial skills. Learners get great financial literacy tips and resources and learn more about education savings opportunities available from the Government of Canada.

## **Money Mentors**

<http://www.moneymentors.ca/>

A not-for-profit consumer service providing workshops, information and counselling programs on; budgeting and basic money management, debt repayment and credit.

## **Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES)**

<http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca>

The delivery of training programs and services directly to adult learners is a core provincial and territorial responsibility. OLES' premise is to step in where the decentralized learning systems may precipitate a need for efficient mechanisms for generating and exchanging knowledge related to adult learning, literacy and essential skills. There are numerous resources on their website.

## **Plain Language Basic Driver's Handbook – Literacy Alberta**

<http://literacyalberta.ca/projects>

Literacy Alberta is working with Alberta Transportation and the AMA to create a plain language Driver's Handbook guide. The Guide will be an excellent resource for preparing learners for the testing process, and using the Government's Handbook.

## **SHARE**

<http://www.literacyalberta.ca/share>

This is Literacy Alberta's electronic conferencing system. SHARE helps members such as literacy coordinators, tutors, volunteers and learners keep on top of the latest literacy developments, both provincially and nationally.

## **Tutela**

<http://tutela.ca/>

Tutela.ca is a national online repository and community for Canadian English as a Second Language (ESL) and French as a Second Language (FSL) professionals. Tutela is a Federal-Provincial joint initiative funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

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