

Each year, Calgary Learns hosts a community consultation with local providers of adult foundational learning programs to discuss needs and trends in the field. This input helps us guide our work, including what professional development we provide, and shapes our future funding priorities.

The Consultation Process

On November 7th, leaders and educators of 18 Foundational Learning programs gathered and shared their perspectives and experience. The results of those conversations are below and a copy of the PowerPoint for the event is attached to this report.

Through conversations with like programs (English Language, Adult Literacy, Indigenous, Essential Skills), participants provided feedback on the following three questions:

- What are the emerging trends or needs in Calgary?
- What current supports exist in Calgary?
- What are the gaps in support?

Feedback was recorded during the discussions and then participants were asked to rank the most pressing needs and gaps in support. Below are the condensed results from that ranking. Also included are responses from an online survey sent out after the consultation for those organizations who were not able to attend.

In the feedback, some specific supports were mentioned which directly relate to some of the most pressing needs and gaps in support. Those are interfiled in the Emerging Trends/Needs section as they address a particular need. All other supports are condensed in the section further down in the report.

Emerging Trends/Needs

- More diverse clients: new Canadians, LGBTQ, youth-family gap, refugees with hearing loss and deaf
- Sustainability of funding
- Lack of knowledge of Indigenous history and culture
- Need more Indigenous people at front end and staff
- Increasing number of learners with complex needs: hearing loss and deafness, mental health, domestic violence, isolation, addictions – need PD for program staff to address this

Current supports:

- United Way and Family & Community Support Services (FCSS) working on the issue of social isolation
 - United Way Reports & Policies: <http://www.unitedway.ca/reports-policies/>
 - FCSS SROI (Social Return on Investment) and Sector Reviews: [http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Pages/FCSS/Social-Return-on-Investment-\(SROI\).aspx](http://www.calgary.ca/CSPS/CNS/Pages/FCSS/Social-Return-on-Investment-(SROI).aspx)
- Canadian Mental Health Association of Calgary (CMHA) Groups and Community workshops: <http://cmha.calgary.ab.ca/groups-and-community/>
- Mental health needs of refugees and staff who work with them

- Connection between literacy and poverty

Current supports:

- Frontier College has started building a national literacy/poverty strategy – will share about this through CanLearn and Bow Valley College’s Initiative Project about the intersection of literacy and poverty in spring 2018
 - Frontier College Position Paper - Poverty Reduction through Improved Literacy: <https://www.frontiercollege.ca/getattachment/3477016e-1c8c-4cb4-be0e-8c6c1ebd319f/Literacy-Poverty.aspx>

- Cross-cultural learning

Current supports:

- Calgary Catholic Immigration Society (CCIS) Cultural Diversity workshops: <https://www.ccisab.ca/community/cultural-diversity-services.html>

Current Supports

General supports mentioned:

- Collaborative/flexible/responsive funders
- Fee assistance
- IT support
- First language support/multi-lingual facilitators
- Board of governors
- Community support/elders
- Career supports
- Family education
- Drama education for people with disabilities
- Counsellor who speaks ASL
- childcare

Specific supports mentioned:

- Immigration, Refugees & Citizenship Canada (IRCC) funding:
 - <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/partners-service-providers/funding.html>
- Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) training
 - CCLB e-Learning Portal: <http://learning.language.ca/>
- Financial support from Calgary Learns
 - Funding page: <http://www.calgarylearns.com/funding/>
- Transportation support from City of Calgary
 - Link to Low Income and Senior transit pass information: <http://www.calgarytransit.com/fares-passes/passes>
- “Green Bag” Food Support
 - The Alex Community Food Centre – Drop-In Breakfast and Community Lunch: <http://thealexafc.ca/programs/>
 - Calgary Food Bank Hamper Request Line: <http://www.calgaryfoodbank.com/need-food/>
 - Hillhurst Sunnyside Community Association Food Programs: <https://www.hsca.ca/community-food-program/>

- Language Bank at Immigrant Services Calgary (ISC): translation, interpretation
 - <https://immigrantservicescalgary.ca/our-services/translation-interpretation-services>
- Volunteer ESL Tutor Training Project (VESL) of Bow Valley College:
 - <https://centre.bowvalleycollege.ca/networks/vesl-network>
- Bow Valley College Instructor Training and Professional Development:
 - <https://centre.bowvalleycollege.ca/english-language-learning/instructor-training-professional-development>
- Community Hubs – partnership between United Way and City of Calgary:
 - <http://www.calgaryunitedway.org/impact/communities/community-hubs>
- Further Education Society of Alberta (FESA): <https://www.furthered.ca/>

Gaps in Support

- Should we develop our local (Calgary) adult literacy strategy to create awareness and get involved in collective impact initiatives (Enough For All, justice, mental health)?
- Indigenous learning still lacks funding, professional development, effective policy (not western policy), and knowledge in the community
- Social/emotional learning
- Plain language and common language in various sectors
- Childcare is big help, but there is not enough capacity
- Short-term funding (especially for refugees) and sustainable funding
- Not enough ESL Literacy levels offered
- Pre-employment skills for those who've been outside of the workplace for a long time
- Deaf-friendly

Final Activity:

The final activity of the consultation was to respond to the following two questions.

- What works well in your relationship with Calgary Learns?
- What are your suggestions for areas of improvement?

Below are the condensed results of those conversations.

Calgary Learns – What Works Well

Staff/Organization qualities:

- Approachable, responsive and friendly
- Flexible and open-minded
- Commitment to Indigenous learners
- Helpful and knowledgeable
- Transparent
- Communication is open – they listen
- Articulate concern for learners versus numbers

Process:

- Review of applications – they trust their agencies (they want to be successful)
- Requests for Proposals respond to emerging needs
- Consultation with Elders
- Removed midterm reports
- Not micro-managing

- Deeply appreciate initiative funding: willing to take risk and trusts that a community/organization can do the work to resolve and address an issue within the context of our community (not looking to import expertise)

Other:

- LOLAs (Life of Learning Awards)
- Support professional development and capacity building
- Website and newsletter have improved
- Community engagement
- Act as a catalyst / convener
- Knowledgeable referrals

Calgary Learns – Suggestions for Improvement

- Push provincial funder for return of multi-year funding (return of) rather than annual
- Reach across sectors and kind of work (justice, health), foundational learners, literacy, build connections / knowledge with other serving agencies / policies
- Family literacy – more focus and support
- Increase advocacy for the sector (esp. family literacy)
- Provide cross-cultural training
- Funding for research for best practices
- Burden of evaluations
- Consolidation – concern that we will have a “competitive” process – support a “collaborative” process + community - the language shapes or infers a culture

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Bow Valley College
 Calgary Catholic Immigration Society
 Calgary Chinese Community Service Association
 Calgary Immigrant Educational Society
 Calgary Immigrant Women’s Association
 Calgary John Howard Society
 Calgary Public Library
 Canadian Mental Health Association of Calgary
 CanLearn Society
 Carya
 Centre for Newcomers
 Community and Social Services, Government of Alberta
 Deaf and Hear Alberta
 Families Matter Society
 Further Education Society of Alberta
 Immigrant Services Calgary
 Inside Out Theatre
 North East Family Connections