



SkillsPlus – Program Description

Greater Victoria employers can address the continual need to engage and retain employees by participating in a program designed to improve Essential Skills in the workplace. The SkillsPlus program gives up to 200 eligible employees the opportunity to boost their skills.



Small and mid-sized businesses in the retail/wholesale/grocery and tourism/hospitality sectors are invited to take part in a joint program of the READ Society, the Community Social Planning Council of Greater Victoria and Bridges for Women Society. Funding is through the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Agreement.



The READ Society and the Community Social Planning Council have examined employment and literacy issues that affect employers and employees during the last four years. Bridges for Women Society has delivered employment training in the Greater Victoria area for more than 20 years. The work of these organizations, combined with international research on best practices, has shown that improving Essential Skills can benefit both employers and employees.

In this program, training in Essential Skills such as computer use, reading and numeracy will be built into work-based training. Employers who have invested in Essential Skills training have seen accuracy, productivity and safety improve as employees' self-confidence, loyalty and flexibility increase.

How does the SkillsPlus Program work?

Employer and employee needs are first identified through small business and employee needs assessments. Next, customized Essential Skills programs are created and delivered. Training delivery can take place on-the-job in the workplace or wherever and whenever most suits participant needs. This approach demonstrates how Essential Skills programs can be tailored to assist employers and employees across the region.

The READ Society developed and piloted an organizational needs assessment tool to help small employers identify the best focus for their training dollars. READ's workplace educators will design and deliver training programs that are aligned with business goals, and relevant to employee needs.

The Community Social Planning Council is contributing and building on its findings from the *Labour Market Dialogues, Phases I-III*, which researched and documented a series of concrete tips and strategies to help employers



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welcome people facing barriers to employment. Participating businesses may be profiled in the Community Social Planning Council's e-newsletter, *The Employer CHALLENGE*.

Since 1988, Bridges for Women Society has delivered programs that support participants to identify and overcome barriers to employment, job retention and advancement in the workplace. In this project, Bridges' workplace educators will provide face-to-face and on-line training services based on the results of the organizational needs assessments.

Why Essential Skills Improvement?

With a shift in the Canadian economy from manufacturing and natural resources to a knowledge-based economy, continuous learning is crucial. Essential Skills are needed in order for Canadians to keep pace with the continuous change in today's world of work.

Essential Skills include reading text, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, thinking skills, computer use and continuous learning. These skills can be developed at increasing levels of complexity throughout life. They provide the foundation for all other learning and enable people to adapt as their jobs change.

Participate in This Program

Greater Victoria small and mid-sized businesses in the retail/wholesale/grocery and tourism/hospitality sectors are candidates for participation. Training opportunities may be developed and delivered for up to 200 eligible employees. Help with childcare and transportation costs may be available for employees.

The READ Society, the Community Social Planning Council and Bridges for Women also offer:

- Career mentoring, expert advice and resources
- Community presentations
- Workplace learning educators
- Economic analysis
- Recognition of workplaces that strive to improve literacy
- More at these websites:
 - readsociety.bc.ca
 - communitycouncil.ca
 - bridgesworks.ca

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