



## Discovering Learning Needs: Workplace Learning Phase 2

### Project Description

No matter what's happening in the economy, managing change and retaining promising employees is an ongoing business concern. One successful strategy is to provide learning opportunities: Employees want to learn and may leave a job that isn't providing them with the opportunity to grow.

That's what Greater Victoria employees told the READ Society during our year-long research project on workplace learning. Interviews with employers and employees in five sectors, coupled with an international study of best practices, showed that safety, productivity and loyalty increase with basic skills training, and learning builds confidence and flexibility.

We are now developing a tool for assessing basic skills training needs, and inviting businesses to participate. The custom-designed basic skills assessment will show the best way to discover an organization's training needs. Drawing on Canadian and international models, we will be working with businesses in BC's Capital Region to assess the basic skills training needs of their employees. Qualifying businesses are those in the retail, food services, and accommodation sectors.

The project is available at no cost to employers and employees through funding from the Canada-British Columbia Labour Market Development Agreement.

### Assess basic skills

In Phase I of READ's workplace learning research, employers said they wanted to know how to find out if basic skills issues are affecting their businesses. In Phase II, we are conducting *organizational needs assessments* to show how basic skills affect individual businesses.

Upon completion, each participating business will receive a complimentary report regarding the status of workplace learning in their business, along with customized options for next steps.

The assessment will help employers understand the best focus for their training dollars, assure that training programs are aligned with business goals, and that training is relevant to employee needs. The results of all the assessments will be analyzed for sectoral trends.

### Focus on continuous learning

With a shift in the Canadian economy from manufacturing and natural resources to a knowledge-based economy, continuous learning is essential. Basic skills are indispensable in order for Canadians to keep pace with the continuous change in today's world of work. Basic skills include



reading text, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, and problem solving. 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.

In our Phase 1 surveys, employers said they consider literacy extremely important to the future success of their business. Employees can read, write and add but some still struggle to fill out forms accurately, understand or give oral instructions, calculate quantities accurately or use computers.

Basic skills education takes place informally in most workplaces, with people helping each other as needed. Workplace learning programs make this process more systematic and effective.

### **Participate in this project**

Greater Victoria businesses in the retail, food services, and accommodation sectors are eligible to participate at no cost. We're recruiting businesses during the summer for fall participation.

The READ Society also offers:

- Expert advice
- Community presentations
- Resources
- Workplace Learning educators
- Recognition of workplaces that strive to improve literacy
- More at [www.readsociety.bc.ca](http://www.readsociety.bc.ca)

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