

DESIGNED TO WORK



An integrated approach to skills development

Suggested approach for developing a skills reference document.

This reference document should be designed by an andragogical committee, ideally consisting of the project manager or coordinator, a specialist in the targeted occupation, and an experienced basic skills instructor.

It should take into account the needs both of the targeted sector employers and of the targeted job seekers.

1. Implementation

Step 1: Learning more about the targeted occupation

- The andragogical committee familiarizes itself with the concept of competency-based approach and with the different types of existing skills.
- The andragogical committee gathers all the information available about the targeted occupation and work positions, as well as about existing reference documents or training programs related with this occupation and employment sector.
- The committee produces a brief descriptive document presenting the results of this data collection. This document helps understand the targeted occupation, describes the typical work environment and presents the main entry-level tasks.

Step 2: Defining the tasks to perform and the skills involved

- The committee explores with the targeted sector employers the profile of the tasks that a newly-employed worker needs to perform in these types of positions; between 8 and 12 of the most important tasks. ¹
- The tasks are then broken down into task description items: operations, processes, skills, attitudes and general behaviours. With these descriptions, it is possible to

¹ We use the following definition for tasks: "Actions corresponding to the main activities to perform in an occupation; they generally help illustrate the products or results of the job, for example, repairing breaks, driving a truck and installing a drainage system" (free translation from: *Les guides méthodologiques d'appui à la mise en œuvre de l'approche par compétences en formation professionnelle*; Organisation internationale de la Francophonie).

determine which skills are involved to perform the tasks. Task complexity is directly proportional to the number of skills required to perform this task.

- The specific, specialized or technical skills² required to support the performance of the identified tasks are defined.
- The general skills³ to be developed in order to support the performance of the identified tasks are identified. The skills profiles to be developed are based on **tasks related to entry-level jobs in the employment sector**, which can be supported by general skills, such as the essential, generic or second-language skills required to perform the identified tasks.
- The committee reviews and enhances the descriptive document. The new version describes the frequency, complexity and significance of the tasks to perform. It identifies the specialized skills deemed necessary to support the performance of the occupation tasks, and their relationships with general skills. It describes work relations, collaboration with others, etc.

Step 3: First validation and recognition

- The committee validates the skills profiles with the employers consulted; at this stage, it must be ensured that the content accurately reflects the overall situation of the occupation and the various tasks and components of entry level duties. The purpose of validating the skills reference document with employers is to ensure that each skill relates to the tasks and work situations specific to entry-level jobs in the occupation.
- At this stage, the committee and employers can still discuss the recognition of the skills developed: could the identified skills profiles lead to some forms of learning recognition or professional qualification that would be relevant to the targeted employment sector? (Establishing valid benchmarks for professional qualification, identifying at least everything that the work environment deems necessary to do the work in entry-level jobs.)

Step 4: Adapting the skills reference document to the target clientele

- Based on the targeted job-seekers' needs, the andragogical committee defines the most important general skills to be developed during the intervention. The intention here is to identify the general skills that will help acquire and develop the specialized skills required.
- At this stage, it is a matter of determining what place the essential, generic and second-language skills will occupy in the intervention.
- The skills reference document will have to take into account the target clientele's literacy levels, working-language proficiency levels, as well as cultural and socio-economic situation.
- If necessary, we may need to further specify the target clientele in order to facilitate the identification of general skills required to ensure a good integration into employment for the targeted occupation.

² Job-specific or specialized skills are directly related to the performance of tasks in the context of work. They refer to aspects that are specific, practical, well-defined and directly related to the practice of an occupation (*free translation from: Les guides méthodologiques d'appui à la mise en œuvre de l'approche par compétences en formation professionnelle ; Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*).

³ General skills can be associated with activities that go beyond the occupation tasks, but that generally contribute to the performance of the targeted occupation tasks. These skills are generally common to several tasks and transferable to several occupations or work situations... General skills should allow the integration of the underlying principles and concepts of professional activities, in order to help people deal with various situations and adapt to varied and changing contexts (*free translation from: Les guides méthodologiques d'appui à la mise en œuvre de l'approche par compétences en formation professionnelle; Organisation internationale de la Francophonie*).

Step 5: Validation and finalization

- The andragogical committee validates the revised skills profiles with educators and employment counsellors. The purpose of the validation is to ensure that the identified general skills take into account the training and employment integration requirements of the targeted job seekers.
- The committee completes the brief descriptive document presenting the role of general skills in the training and employment integration and retention of the target clientele. This document could describe the strategic role of the general skills to be developed in the target clientele, both to help develop specific, specialized or technical skills as part of the training project (training support) and to promote job integration and retention based on the targeted occupation (work support).

2. Tools

For more information about the different types of skills and the competency-based approach, refer to the following articles, taken from the RESDAC's blog **À Lire!** (in French only) :

- [Compétence : un terme en évolution](#)
- [Des compétences pour qui?](#)
- [Compétences essentielles : la réflexion canadienne](#)

To help you develop your training reference document, refer to the guides **Les guides méthodologiques d'appui à la mise en œuvre de l'approche par compétences en formation professionnelle** (in French only) produced by the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, available at: <http://bv.cdeacf.ca/record.php?record=19257681124910758639>

3. Example

Approach used by the Centre d'apprentissage et de perfectionnement of Hawkesbury (ON) in its integrated training project called "Food Services Assistant certificate"⁴

Identifying the general skills and specific skills to be developed

An original Food Services Assistant certificate offered in a conventional format by the Alfred Campus of the University of Guelph required 180 hours of theoretical training and 30 hours of on-the-job training. It focused on the development of technical skills specific to the targeted sector of activity: food services assistant in the kitchens of hospitals and senior citizen care facilities. The certificate was to be offered as an intensive course, based on the availability of the recruited workers, and in a more conventional format (theoretical and laboratory courses with no specific adaptations). The version of the certificate offered in partnership and in integrated format was adapted to an adult clientele with low literacy skills (at the top of level 1 and in level 2 of the IALSS) that had no experience in this field of activity. In this respect, the first level of adaptation was based on a comprehensive identification of the skills types that the program needed to develop, taking into account the target clientele and the nature of the occupation. In this level of adaptation, the practitioners (program coordinators and trainers) contemplated what skills to develop in the targeted adults with regard to their needs and when the time came to find a job as a food services assistant. That said, what place will essential skills, generic skills, second-language skills or specialized skills occupy in order to meet the integration needs of the targeted professional field? Furthermore, in identifying what skills needed to be developed, we had to remember that the training would need to follow a realistic timeline to facilitate the workplace integration process (20 to 30 intensive weeks). After deliberations and experiments, the program designers and the trainers proposed that the following skill profile be developed:

I- General skills

The general skills that were targeted in the training project were prioritized according to the nature of the occupation's duties (food services assistant in health care institutions). In addition to preparing the learners for their integration into the workplace, these skills would help strategically support, during the training period, the development of technical or vocational skills that are recognized by the industry.

Essential Skills

Specific attention was paid to the essential skills of "reading texts" and "document use," because the nature of the work involves using written documents (recipes, instructions, manuals, etc.). Little emphasis was put on the more traditional essential skills, such as numeracy and writing, given their limited use in the duties of this occupation. However, the importance of verbal communication skills and working with others was stressed, because the work in an institutional kitchen requires a great deal of collaboration and cohesion. A digital technology component (introduction) was included in order to introduce or pursue (for some learners) the development of this skill that has become essential in the labour market.

Generic skills

Some generic skills were quickly regarded as important skills to develop, because of

⁴ "Towards an Integrated Model to Support the Literacy Development of Francophones in Canada"; FCAF-RESDAC, 2011.

the nature of the occupation's duties. Note the following elements: organizational skills, ability to carry out repetitive tasks, sense of responsibility, thoroughness, ability to work under pressure, team spirit. Since these skills were strongly linked to action, they were systematically integrated into the learning objectives of the different laboratories and the on-the-job training. They were also addressed in courses related to workplace communication, and more specifically, employability development activities.

Second-language skills

This type of interactional skills was not addressed in a systematic fashion, because the position of food services assistant does not require interpersonal contact with a Francophone or Anglophone public. However, certain elements of the use of English as the language of written communication (seeing certain technical documents related to work) were integrated strategically and in an ad hoc manner to reflect the reality of this business sector in Ontario.

II- Skills specific to the targeted occupation

The technical and specialized skills to be developed were identified from two major sources of information: 1) the content of the courses of the initial 210-hour certificate covering the minimum requirements of the Ontario Ministry of Health (safe food handling, food preparation and equipment, understanding and applying knowledge on nutrition, management of food services, etc.); and 2) the vocational knowledge of trainers, employers and the program coordination for Alfred Campus of the University of Guelph.

III- Strategies or abilities to support learning and integration

Specific attention was paid to employability strategies or abilities (preparing a résumé, preparing for a job interview, creating a portfolio, etc.) to facilitate workplace integration for participants from the training project.