

DESIGNED TO WORK



An integrated approach to skills development

A Proposed Approach to Mobilizing and Integrating Partner Resources

1. Mobilizing Financial Resources: A Financing Package that is Part of the Andragogical Intervention

The financing package is based on the pooling of the partners' existing resources and takes into account both the needs of learners and employers and the administrative requirements of partners and their funders.

Implementation

The question of a financing package must, of course, be addressed at the start of the project. However, the work involved in developing a more specific financing package will occur with the andragogical intervention and should be completed before starting delivery.

The financing package should be the responsibility of the steering committee, which is composed of a representative from each of the project's direct partners (training organizations, employability services, employers and others at the agreed time...) and supervises the andragogical intervention.

When designing a financing package, the steering committee should always take into account each partner's jurisdictions and accountability and reporting requirements.

- The organization responsible, together with the identified partners, designs a financing package that supports the andragogical intervention. In exploring the possibility of pooling all of the partners' resources, we are able to determine whether the partners' educational, financial and community resources (programs, services, physical and material infrastructures, human resources...) can help support a joint integrated training program, taking into account the availability of the human and financial resources of the partners involved.
- The training project's financing package must allow for regular team meetings between the stakeholders (instructors and coordinator) in order to coordinate the development of the training curriculum and the strategic planning of teaching and learning activities.

- Furthermore, the steering committee will need to design an intervention that entails minimal costs for the participants.

2. Mobilizing the Human Resources

The financing package is based, among other things, on the pooling and mobilization of the partners' human resources in order to **put work teams in place that ensure the project progresses smoothly.**

How the Steering Committee Frames the Project

This committee is composed of a representative/manager from each of the project's direct partners (training organizations, employability services, employers and others at the agreed time, etc.). It must plan the training project while respecting each partner's jurisdictions and accountability and reporting requirements:

- The committee plans and organizes the training project's andragogical intervention and the financing package that will make it all possible.
- The committee considers one significant administrative issue, which is the establishment of some form of recognized professional qualification for the nature of the targeted intervention (professional certification or qualification recognized by employers, departments, institutions).
- To ensure the project's success, the committee plans for the implementation of a centralized system for intake, registration, assessment of literacy levels and skills, identification of learner needs, and management of teaching/administrative files (single window).

Project Coordination

The introduction of one person responsible for project coordination will help ensure the best conditions for the project's success. This person is responsible for developing the educational program, and for preparing and leading the various teams' working meetings.

The primary functions of the coordinator include:

- Calling the meetings of the steering committee; writing the meeting minutes and the agenda for this committee;
- Coordinating the recruitment, selection and registration of the learners;
- Ensuring links between the partners;
- Coordinating the relationships with employers and all the placements;
- Planning for the mobilization of the human, physical and material resources needed to develop the training project;
- Ensuring the production of schedules, timelines, or any other official document for the training project;
- Supporting the development of the training curriculum and the delivery of the program;
- Establishing the rules for learners' participation;
- Fostering accessibility and success; maximizing the number of learners.

Support the development of the training curriculum and delivery of the program

The coordinator supports the development of a training curriculum based, among other things, on the diagram that illustrates the learning or training sequence (consult the sheet "Developing a curriculum framework").

- This type of planning is intended to ensure a certain amount of consistency and a progression of learning experiences during the initial phase of developing the training curriculum. The planning must take into account certain organizational constraints, including: the entire training time needed to cover the reference manual and the time allocated to each skill;
- The number of hours of weekly learning;
- Those periods during which the workplace is available for the organization of work placements.

To support the development and delivery of a training curriculum, the coordinator must guide the team of instructors and support the pedagogical development. To do so, the coordinator must:

- Organize and lead the meetings of the team of instructors;
- Support their work in educational planning and in delivering the training;
- Welcome and support the new instructors;
- Identify the needs of instructors with regard to technical and educational development;
- Plan and coordinate professional development activities, etc.

Keep in mind that the detailed description of the training curriculum and courses will be developed by the instructors. The coordinator is simply meant to support the instructor with the educational planning that needs to be done before giving the course.

Establish the rules for learners' participation

The coordinator must develop the **rules governing participation** in the training project. An information session is offered to all adults interested in the project (potential learners), during which the project's main training and employability goals and the rules for learners' participation are outlined:

- The training project offers learners an environment similar to the work place: full time; justified absences; respect for colleagues; respect for the subordinate/supervisor relationship; etc.
- The rules for participation are written in the *participation contract*, which *the* learner must sign at the beginning of the program to ensure that he or she understands the project and its orientations with regard to adult education, and to ensure that he or she accepts the schedule and any responsibilities the project entails;
- There are clear directives and procedures with respect to authorized absences and for justifying the removal of learners from the project.

Foster accessibility and success; maximize the number of learners.

Learners must be able to profit from individual support for certain needs. The coordinator must ensure that either he or she, or a specialized resource from among the partners, can intervene as required.

The coordinator must explore the possibility of combining learner resources. With training that focuses on a professional field, it is possible to combine the student population because there is no clear distinction between training offered to a “young person” and that offered to an “adult.” A large number of young adults (16 to 25 years) could thus have access to the training, if the admission rules and financing terms so allow it. The possibility of combining young students with a diverse adult clientele, without being an optimization factor *per se*, does allow for an increase in the amount of training available and may help ensure the sustainability of some training programs in smaller communities.

The coordinator must also consider adopting a training schedule with variable intakes in order to offer the chance of including more than one registration period so that those searching for work can join the program intermittently (e.g. Divide the program into independent blocks of training)¹.

Employers

The training project is linked to a network of local employers to allow learners to consider different workplaces and experiences. The training project explores, with the employers themselves, what roles they might play within the context of a training project:

- Proactively offering work placement opportunities for learners;
- An evaluation role; assessing the transfer of learning in the performance of tasks in a work environment, within the context of job placements;
- The possibility of employment upon completion of the work placement;
- A role of validation² and feedback, which helps adapt the program to the needs of the labour market, to collect material from the workplace that will facilitate development of learning material and to recruit instructors or potential learners;
- With the other partners, consider the establishment of some form of recognized certification for the nature of the targeted intervention (certification or professional qualification recognized by employers, departments, institutions); setting relevant benchmarks for a professional qualification, identifying the minimal requirements needed to do the work required by the work place when starting a new job.

The Training Team

The training team is central to the development of the training project. The instructors and the coordinator need to take a systematic and thorough approach with regard to the sharing of responsibilities between the members of a training team and the preparation of training activities. To support the stakeholders’ work, the training project’s financing package must allow for regular work meetings between the stakeholders before and during the delivery of training, in order to allow the instructors:

¹In this type of schedule, a person looking for work could integrate into the program to follow Block B of training with one cohort, and then complete Block A with the next cohort. This delivery method, in addition to offering the target clientele with more opportunities to integrate the project, helps to better optimize the training project by doubling the number of registration opportunities, and thus better ensuring its sustainability.

²The goal in validating the skills profile with employers is to ensure that each skill is relevant to the tasks and workplace situations specific to a position in that field.

- To identify each person's role; how to foster team work; how to support each other's work;
- To coordinate their teaching and learning activities in order to harmonize the courses and the learning activities;
- To work in a cohesive team in order to observe the learning that occurs; to share amongst themselves any observations made about the learners³, to analyze certain results, to discuss problematic situations, to make any adjustments needed, to plan any interventions required in order to make adjustments with the learners (in a group or individually), etc.;
- To facilitate communication with the learners and instil harmony in the instructor/learner relationship (a relationship that gradually tends toward a supervisor/employee relationship);
- To promote the integration, by all the instructors, of learning and assessment activities for employability skills into all the courses in order to share this responsibility with the entire training team, given the crosscutting nature of generic skills that specifically support the development of employability.

Choosing instructors

In order to respond adequately to the needs, the team of instructors should possess:

- Significant work experience in the field of the specific job (for instructors teaching the more technical or specialized component); experience teaching adults is an asset.
- General training that is sufficient to be able to teach in the field;
- The teaching skills needed to train and evaluate the learners according to a skills-based approach.

Instructors require two important generic skills: **team work and adaptability**. Instructors must encourage cohesive team work and team spirit between themselves and with the coordinator, in order to create a context in which the skills-based approach can be implemented (similarity with a working environment, numerous opportunities to apply and transfer learning, adapting quickly to group decisions, etc.). This adaptability will allow them to work with a training curriculum that is a "work in progress" and that adjusts over time.⁴

Given the profile of the ideal instructor, we recommend a hiring process that is based on experiential interviews (demonstration and simulation activities, etc.), to ensure that instructors possess the general and essential skills needed to lead diverse learning groups, that they demonstrate a strong capacity to adapt quickly to new situations, and that they demonstrate an ability to interact easily with adults who have lower literacy skills, etc. There should be a probationary period during which procedures are set out for observation by the coordinator and feedback to guide professional development.

Professional development and continuing education for instructors

Given the integrated and flexible nature of the intervention, it is important to have a learning/continuing education plan in place for the instructors. This plan should provide a

³ It is important that the learners know that all instructors are constantly observing the learning that occurs in a coherent and consistent manner.

⁴ Furthermore, the following characteristics and personal qualities are desirable: Strong interpersonal relationships, a sense of responsibility, organization and planning skills, team spirit, the ability to express themselves orally and in writing, the desire to grow and to perfect their skills, and the ability to learn from their experiences.

mechanism for regular team meetings so that stakeholders can complete the training curriculum while delivering the project, exchange ideas on the skills-based approach, jointly plan the learning activities for the entire project to ensure complementarity between the courses, study problematic situations, find solutions, and plan learner interventions in order to preserve project cohesion, etc.

The meetings and the teamwork represent a powerful professional development and continuous learning tool for the instructors, because they provide:

- Familiarity with the profession for instructors who are not from the targeted work sector; these instructors do not necessarily have practical knowledge of the profession, but they are involved in the training project.
- Pedagogical development: While, overall, it is relatively easy to recruit instructors with a sound knowledge of the skills in the targeted profession, it is much more difficult to find an expert in the profession who has sufficient experience in adult education. Continuing education can apply to more general elements, such as planning and preparing training activities, the various training methods to use, the use of teaching equipment and material, planning and carrying out practical and evaluation activities, etc.
- Educational training in relation to implementing an approach based on multiple and integrated skills: It is important to offer instructors, regardless of how well they know the profession, continuous training about the skills-based approach used to develop the training project.
- Embracing the principles of adult education⁵ that are rooted in the integrated approach to skills development and that guided the conceptual groundwork and values underpinning the curriculum framework. The curriculum framework and its underlying adult education principles influence the development of the training curriculum and the teaching and learning strategies that will be implemented within the context of the training project.

⁵ For reference, here are a few adult education principles to keep in mind: Have the learners participate actively and make them responsible for their own learning; take into account each person's pace and way of learning; take into account and reinvest the experiential learning of the learners; consider that the opportunity to learn is closely linked to the strategies and methods used to acquire skills; foster the strengthening and integration of learning and skills; prioritize practical learning activities and projects adapted to the realities of the labour market; communicate with the learners using proper language and appropriate technical terms; seek out, as much as possible, cooperation from the work place; ensure the learners realize that vocational training is an important way to achieve social integration and personal development.

Example from CAP: component 3⁶

Financing package and mobilization of partner resources

Forms of certification and recognition

This Fast Track training program was of a short duration (25 intensive weeks); this allowed unemployed learners with low literacy skills to undertake or pursue training, which integrated both:

- Training that focused on the development of targeted literacy skills;
- Qualifying or vocational training recognized by the workplace.

Upon graduation, the learner received a college certificate as a *Food Services Assistant* from the Alfred Campus of the University of Guelph. The certificate was recognized by the Ontario Ministry of Health and the Ontario Long-Term Care Association. Alfred Campus recognized all of the 528 hours spent in the classroom and the 105 hours of on-the-job training. It awarded 1.5 credits to learners who completed the training and who wanted to continue their studies with a view to obtaining a post-secondary diploma in nutrition and food safety. The graduating learner also earned a package of secondary credits from the EOETC. The EOETC recognized the entire vocational training package and the on-the-job training of 105 hours. It could also recognize the basic training retroactively (recognition of prior learning) if a graduating learner so requested it. A learner could receive secondary credits for the classroom training and the on-the-job training in the form of cooperative education.

Responsibility for delivery

An initial training service component was identified to target the development of basic skills or literacy skills. This component represented 40% of the entire training package (200 hours in total). It was supported by Ontario's Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program offered by the CAP and, in part, by the secondary level accredited training program offered by the EOETC. A second training service component focused on the development of specialized skills (vocational and technical) for a total of 60% of the training package (330 hours in total). This component was offered by the Alfred Campus of the University of Guelph and, in part, by the EOETC.

Program coordination

A steering committee consisting of representatives from the three training partners was responsible for the planning and broad guidelines of the Fast Track program. Logistical coordination was assumed by the CAP, through the intermediary of a partnership program coordinator. This coordinator convened the committee meetings, prepared the committee minutes and agendas, coordinated learner registration and recruitment, coordinated the links between each of the partners, and prepared schedules, deadlines or any other official program documents. However, the partner coordinator from the EOETC coordinated the entire gamut of on-the-job training.

Other partner contributions

The Alfred Campus of the University of Guelph provided a great deal of the infrastructure for the Fast Track training program. This infrastructure included a classroom and an institutional kitchen laboratory. The EOETC provided a computer laboratory and was responsible for its maintenance and regular upkeep. The CAP coordinated a transit system (minibus) for transporting the learners from the Hawkesbury sector to the Alfred Campus. The Ontario Works program from Prescott-Russell paid for some of the laboratory costs. The CAP, through the LBS program, offered the learners all the training support services provided for in the program (LBS assessment and classification, training assistance, training plans, etc.). Each partner contributed jointly and individually to the promotion of the Fast Track program.

Responsibility for developing the instructional content

The Alfred Campus of the University of Guelph provided the instructional content recognized by the Ministry of Health for the Food Services Assistant certificate. The EOETC updated and adapted the content. The CAP financed and coordinated the development of instructional content or the general training component.

⁶ *Towards an Integrated Model to Support the Literacy Development of Francophones in Canada*; FCAF-RESDAC, 2011.