

# DESIGNED TO WORK



## An integrated approach to skills development

## A Proposed Approach to Evaluating the Training Project

Within the context of the integrated approach, it is essential that mechanisms be established for evaluating, adjusting and refining the activities. It is not a matter of strictly evaluating the delivery of the training itself, but instead the entire approach of the training project—from the needs analysis and creation of the partnership right up to the end of the intervention. In this respect, we recommend that this “evaluation” component be taken into consideration right from the start of the process, and that all project stakeholders be constant in their approach. In fact, it is considered important to evaluate and analyze the activities carried out during the course of the project, in order to adjust them permanently to the context.

### Implementation

The evaluation component of the intervention is based primarily on a mechanism for collecting information and data over the course of the project. For that, the parties need to agree on the method and the time allocated to the continuing evaluation. There is a need, among others, to plan for data collection and analysis activities with all stakeholders:

- The members of the steering committee
- The coordinator
- The training team
- The learners
- The employers involved
- All other partners directly involved in the training project.

The idea of a continuous evaluation process means understanding to what extent the intervention is working well or less well, with the goal being to adjust and improve it. It is also a matter of being interested in group dynamics (learners, stakeholders, committees) and understanding the influence that people have on each other, etc. More specifically, a continuous evaluation can help answer such questions as follows:

- Once it has been established, how is our collaborative process working? What are the contentious points, or the elements to be improved? How well are the partners communicating?
- How well is our referral or single entry point system working? What aspects require improvement?

- What was the outcome of our first integrated program? Are the adults satisfied? Are the employers satisfied? What would they like to improve? What are our success rates and drop-out rates?
- What improvements should be made to our second integrated project, if applicable?

Data collection can take the form of questionnaires (satisfaction surveys, post-mortem evaluation questionnaires, etc.), focus groups, semi-directed interviews, statistical analyses, etc.

## Reflective practice as a means of continuous evaluation

In an integrated approach, the partners and stakeholders should see themselves as researchers who are experimenting, observing and analyzing a process in development. As people who take action, learn and make decisions, all the parties involved would benefit from taking a reflective approach, wherein the analysis of the experiment informs the project's evolution and its future.

What is more, the development of the strategic partnerships needed to create an integrated project and the andragogical interventions that give shape to these interventions requires much discussion and negotiation among the partners. Regular management of the intervention, particularly during the first service offering, demands continuous evaluations of the various components of the training program, and that any emerging problematic situations be addressed as needed. In this respect, a stance based on reflective practice can be very useful in dealing with certain fundamental questions or certain issues related to adult education.

As an example, a reflective practice process based on open discussions and negotiations can answer several critical questions, such as:

- How does one establish passing levels for learners that will satisfy all of the partners? Some institutional partners have success criteria that are based primarily on summative academic performance (pass/fail marks based on written tests at the end of a course). Some have criteria based in part on summative and formative academic performance (marks received during the course and at the end) and in part on the production of work. Others might have pass/fail criteria based in part on the learner's ability to integrate the targeted employment sector (employability criteria) and in part on his/her commitment to the program (training participation criteria).
- Along the same line of thought, when do we need to pull a learner out of the program? When he/she fails one assessment activity or when he/she has difficulty participating in the program?

All these crucial questions and many others can be subject to continuous evaluations, discussions and adjustments throughout the implementation phase and ongoing management of the training project.

Furthermore, specific attention must be paid to the amount of reflective time that is set aside for the training team. Instructors are involved with the learners over a long period of time, and we need to obtain their analysis of the intervention. For this reason, instructors could be provided with several options for collecting information and means of discussion. An instructor's analysis of the intervention could be done in writing, through a logbook, for example. There could also be "reflective discussions" held, occurring either in pairs or in groups. We could also choose to use a mixture of these formulas. In all cases, during any

moments of discussion and analysis about the intervention, participants need to be reminded that these opportunities are being organized in order to improve everyone's practices and to enhance the intervention, and are not to be used to evaluate individual staff members. Hierarchical relationships need to be put aside during these discussions.

## **Example from CAP: Component 4**

### **Continually evaluating and improving the intervention**

Over the years, the CAP and its partners were able to adjust the nature of the collaborations and the andragogical interventions within the context of these joint initiatives of integrated services for adults with low literacy skills. The continuous collection of information and data (such as outcomes, comments, and criticisms from the learners, the practitioners and the partnering organizations) helped to adjust certain activities and to improve the partnerships.

### ***Looking back at the typical example and the CAP's first Fast Track program: the Food Services Assistant certificate***

*Significant modifications were made to the Food Services Assistant Fast Track the second time it ran, as a result of evaluations carried out with the first cohort of learners. First of all, the writing workshops and modular courses were eliminated in order to incorporate the development of targeted skills into certain other courses (food services and communication), because their format was preferred. Because of this incorporation, we avoid making a too obvious distinction between the vocational training component and the basic training component, where the latter may be perceived as less important and optional, because it was integrated to a lesser degree into the development of specialized food services skills. We also eliminated the English as a second-language course, because there was too much heterogeneity in the group of learners. Rather, we incorporated elements of functional English learning in the specialized food services courses.*

### **Important changes after 10 years of delivering the course**

After having offered the Food Services Assistant program for almost 10 years, the CAP and its partners decided to make some significant changes. To this end, they have added the Cook - Level 1 (or Assistant Cook) component in order to increase employment opportunities in other sectors of activity in food services (restaurants, hotels, etc.) for the learners. Furthermore, this change helped to avoid saturating the local employment market for food services assistants in health care institutions. The program has therefore become the Food Services Assistant and Cook - Level 1 certificate.

In this new certificate with its dual recognition, the vocational training component linked to an apprenticeship trade in Ontario (Cook - Level 1 component) added a fourth level of integration (quadrupled). With this component, learners who graduate from this new Fast Track receive:

- recognition by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities as an apprentice in the Cook trade regulated under the Apprenticeship and Certification Act. In this trade, people must complete 6,000 hours of practical training as an apprentice in the workplace and then a second phase of theoretical training. After Level 1, the apprentice can then integrate into the labour market as an apprentice in the Cook trade, with a view to eventually receiving his or her certification once all the requirements have been met.
- a college-level certification (transcript after Level 1, prerequisite for becoming an apprentice cook) from the Alfred Campus of the University of Guelph for the Apprentice Cook - Level 1 or Certified Assistant Cook component. At the end of this level, the graduating learner is also recognized as an Assistant Cook in the market place. As a result, graduating learners who do not want to pursue the subsequent steps of their vocational training (Level 2 to become a Certified Cook or Level 3 to become a Certified Chef) can work as a Certified Assistant Cook.

The Alfred Campus of the University of Guelph provided the instructional content recognized by the

Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for the Cook – Level 1 component. In the modified Fast Track program, the vocational training was therefore spread out over 462 hours. This modified Fast Track program includes 22 weeks of theoretical and practical training, in the classroom and in the laboratory, and 3 weeks of workplace-based training. The classroom training, which is now spread over 5 days/week for a total of 30 hours/week, is divided as follows:

<b>Cours</b>	<b>Heures/semaine</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Volet professionnel</b> (Introduction aux services alimentaires, Salubrité et sécurité, Préparation des aliments et équipements, Nutrition, Gestion des services alimentaires, Boulangerie et pâtisseries, Techniques culinaires pratiques et équipements; Techniques de cuisson, Théories culinaires, Laboratoires, etc.)	21 heures/semaine X 22 semaines	462
<b>Volet de formation de base</b> (communication écrite et technologie informatique, soutien à l'emploi, préparation au stage, communication orale)	9 heures/semaine X 22 semaines	198
<b>Total des heures de formation</b>		<b>660</b>
Stages en milieu de travail		105
<b>Total des heures d'apprentissage</b>		<b>765</b>

Tiré des réunions d'harmonisation de contenu pour le programme d'Aide en alimentation/Cuisinier étape 1, Centre d'apprentissage et de perfectionnement inc.