

DESIGNED TO WORK



An integrated approach to skills development

Introduction

Between October 2013 and September 2015, *Le Réseau pour le développement de l'alphabétisme et des compétences* (RESDAC) is leading the project *Designed to Work: An integrated approach to skills development*. RESDAC is a national network representing organizations dedicated to developing services and programs in skills and literacy development to respond to the needs of francophone adults with limited literacy skills.

Funded by Employment and Social Development Canada's Office of Literacy and Essential Skills, this two-year project will work in four provinces to support implementation sites set up integrated programming for adults with limited literacy skills. Sometimes referred to as a 'busy intersection', this approach to program design offers adult learners with limited literacy skills access to effective, efficient and meaningful programs that prepare them for employment. *Designed to Work* will support two implementation sites - one Francophone, one Anglophone - in each of four provinces: New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Ontario and Saskatchewan. This project will be carried out in collaboration with the associated provincial government.

Background

Too often, adults with limited literacy skills cannot easily access programs that will help them develop the skills and get the qualifications they need for employment. Occupation-specific training programs often require low-skilled learners to develop basic skills or acquire a high school diploma (or GED) before entry into the program. In the best-case scenario, it may take years for adults as they move through non-credit, credit, employability and skills training programs before they achieve a certification or qualification. More often than not, these learners get frustrated with the lengthy and often complicated process and give up before they achieve their employment goals. This linear approach is also resource heavy for the public and private funders.

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RESDAC believes it's time to do things differently. It's time for programming to move away from programs as parking lots and instead embrace busy intersections, in which programs and services intersect in effective and meaningful ways. This community-centred approach brings together programs and services to provide efficient interventions that suit the needs, schedules, goals and interests of adult learners and local employers.

The *Designed to Work* project serves as an opportunity for RESDAC to support the field in implementing the busy intersection approach. Since 2010 RESDAC has been carrying out research on this innovative approach that has been used successfully on a small scale in Ontario and to a greater extent in the United States, England and Australia. *Designed to Work* will put these ideas into practice, and allow for rich investigations of the implementation process to support more widespread use of this innovative and effective approach.

What do busy intersection programs look like?

Designed to Work will support the implementation of integrated programming using the busy intersection approach. This programming will take a community-centred approach to working with low-skilled adults who are interested in advancing in the labour market. The resulting programming will:

- Centre on occupations or industries for which **local jobs** are available
- Focus on **job tasks**, including associated technical, essential, soft and second language skills necessary to perform job tasks in the targeted occupations
- Provide opportunities for authentic **application** of skills
- Include work placements in the community
- Result in **industry-recognized credentials** that allow learners to retain **stable, reasonably paid employment** (beyond minimum wage)
- Provide a **one-stop solution** for learners with limited literacy skills, and eliminate the need for further training after the intervention
- Be relatively **short in duration**, i.e., one year or less
- Rely on **strategic partnerships** with other service providers and employers to maximize local resources, reduce barriers and improve outcomes

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What will happen during the project?

Implementation sites will implement the approach with support from the RESDAC team. While doing so, RESDAC will conduct research that explores the implementation process and makes evident the conditions that support the development, delivery and sustainability of such an approach.

To launch the project, RESDAC will work closely with government representatives in each of the four provinces to identify existing service providers that can serve as implementation sites. RESDAC also plans to continue the dialogue with government representatives in each of the provinces through a Policy Roundtable. Requiring only a limited commitment from government representatives, it will serve as a way for provinces to keep current on the implementation processes and share thoughts and ideas that can serve to further the goals of each province in meeting the needs of adults with limited literacy skills. Through these efforts, everyone involved in this project will embrace innovation and learn from their efforts to better meet the needs of this population.

What role will implementation sites play?

The busy intersection approach relies on all partners at all levels to work together towards the common goal of giving adult learners with limited literacy skills access to effective, efficient and meaningful programs that prepare them for stable employment.

The *Designed to Work* project seeks implementation sites that recognize the value in working differently to better serve adults with limited literacy skills.

The implementation sites will:

- Challenge their thinking and be prepared to work differently using project resources
- Develop strategic partnerships with local organizations to identify how to reallocate local resources, reduce barriers and improve outcomes
- Reallocate existing resources from current services to the development and provision of a busy intersection program

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- Implement the busy intersection approach
- Assign an implementation lead to oversee the implementation process

At each of the eight implementation sites, one implementation lead will oversee the set up of the busy intersection approach. They may carry out the work themselves or oversee others in their performance of the activities. We expect that each site will go through the following four implementation stages:

1. Needs analysis
2. Program design
3. Program development and delivery
4. Program evaluation

Throughout the project, implementation leads will collaborate with the andragogical expert and researchers, maintain records of implementation activities, challenges and successes to support the project's research activities, ensure that key working team members maintain records as required and share information, thoughts and experiences about the implementation process with the research team.

What funding and support will implementation sites receive?

Support will be provided to each of the eight implementation sites in the four provinces. Support will be available in the form of training, coaching and some financial assistance. While \$18 000 per year in funding will be available for each implementation site to offset the costs associated with participating in the project, implementation sites are expected to use existing community resources and structures as much as possible to ensure long-term sustainability of the approach.

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The project's resources will be allocated to cover the costs of the:

- Implementation leads for activities that are specific to the project and not typically part of implementing a new program approach
- Andragogical expert who will provide training, coaching and support to the implementation sites throughout the needs analysis, design, development, delivery and evaluation stages
- Researchers who will collect and analyze data from the implementation sites about the implementation process, challenges and successes

For more information, please contact Gabrielle Lopez, Project Coordinator at projets-gl@resdac.net or by calling at 1-888-906-5666 ext. 7.



RESDAC receives financial support from the Government of Canada through the Office of Literacy and Essential Skills of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Project description

Action Research Project on Employment 2013-2015

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