

EBSM Essential Skills Field Study

By  **BOW VALLEY**
C O L L E G E

*With funding
provided by*  **Canada**

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Bow Valley College thanks Human Resources and Skills Development Canada for providing funding and guidance for this study.

Seventeen organizations in British Columbia and Ontario who deliver Employment Benefits and Support Measures agreed to participate in this study. They deserve praise and recognition for meeting the extra demands placed upon them to train staff, recruit and test participants, gather data and perform a myriad of other steps in the research process. Their staff has contributed an important body of knowledge that will guide future service delivery.

From providing TOWES testing to upgrading opportunities, colleges across Canada are an integral part of Essential Skills service delivery. Three colleges also assisted in the delivery of Essential Skills training for this project: Fanshawe College, Douglas College, and the College of the Rockies.

Bow Valley College gratefully acknowledges the contribution of the 436 individuals who took a TOWES test, debriefed the results and completed an online survey. It is hoped that they found the experience as valuable as the data they contributed.

*Any errors and omissions are the responsibility of Bow Valley College
and should not be taken to reflect upon Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
or the people who participated in this study.*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this study is to assess Essential Skills levels for Employment Benefits and Support Measures (EBSM) clients and to determine the role of Essential Skills in the delivery of EBSM.

Following Essential Skills training, seventeen Employment Assistance Service (EAS) providers in Ontario and British Columbia recruited clients to complete a Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES) and debrief the results. Service providers could use a variety of Essential Skills tools such as the TOWES test scores and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's (HRSDC's) website of job profiles to assist clients.

TOWES is the only assessment available in Canada that can accurately benchmark a test-taker's level in three of nine Essential Skills. TOWES uses authentic workplace documents – such as catalogues, order forms, labels, schematics, regulations, and manuals to test skills in the areas of reading text, document use and numeracy. There are about 16 problem sets per test, which takes about two hours to write. The test is written using pen and paper. Questions range in difficulty and mimic actual workplace tasks; the test-taker assumes the role of a worker who needs to use information embedded in documents to complete the task. Test result scores can be compared to an inventory of occupational profiles compiled by HRSDC, which detail the Essential Skills requirements of Canadian occupations. Currently, about half of Canada's National Occupational Classification (NOC) inventory has been profiled. These occupations are generally frontline occupations that require a high school education and some training. The remaining occupations with higher skill requirements are being profiled by HRSDC and will be available in the future.

A total of 436 clients contributed data regarding their Essential Skill proficiencies by taking a TOWES test. They also provided information about their background by completing a voluntary questionnaire and an online survey. Forty-eight service providers shared their perceptions through an online survey and 15 organizations participated in follow-up telephone interviews.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Participants demonstrate a significant skills deficit in document use.

Participant Essential Skill scores in the areas of reading text and numeracy are only

moderately lower than Canadian averages. However, they are significantly lower (nearly one full level) than the Canadian average in the area of document use. This trend is also evident when participant scores are compared to Essential Skills ratings for their past and their desired occupations. This data is only available for front-line occupations, suggesting that skill gaps are even greater for higher skilled occupations.

2. **There is little variation in Essential Skills scores between EBSM interventions and regions**, although EI/reachback clients tend to score slightly higher.
3. **Clients who are immigrants scored lower than EBSM clients born in Canada.** The most significant gap is found in reading text, followed by document use.
4. **Most clients believe TOWES and Essential Skills information is useful** to help them plan a career or find a job and 63 percent would recommend it to a friend. Their plans did not change after taking TOWES. Approximately half say they want to find a job right away and one-quarter want to return to school. Twenty-five percent say they need to do more research.
5. **Most service providers feel there is a role for Essential Skills and TOWES in the delivery of EBSM.** They say TOWES and Essential Skills are particularly valuable as a career exploration activity and that it is unique; it provides new insight into client skills.
6. **Clients who benefit most from TOWES are those with low Essential Skills scores and those who are interested in career exploration.** Clients in high skilled occupations find the test of limited value because Essential Skills data is not currently available on ‘professional’ occupations and because they are typically less interested in career exploration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Do further research.** Dr. Theresa Kline, a psychometric expert from the University of Calgary has verified that the interpretation of the data in this report is correct. However, caution should be exercised when extrapolating it to other regions of Canada and other populations. In particular, further research to verify the document use skills deficit would help guide policy. Data on designated groups such as

immigrants, Aboriginals and youth should be enhanced. Also, when Essential Skills profiles are complete, EBSM client profiles should be compared with labour market requirements for a more complete picture of skill shortages.

2. **Coordinate the integration of selective Essential Skills in EBSM.** Rolling out Essential Skills tools for use by other EBSM service providers requires a plan with dedicated resources. Establish a coordinating entity to provide leadership and ensure service providers receive training and consistent, quality support. Encourage cross-jurisdictional sharing of resources.
3. **Create an inventory of resources and ideas currently available for Essential Skills upgrading.** Most service providers are uncertain about what is available and whether ‘traditional’ venues such as general academic upgrading and literacy tutoring are the best options for clients with Essential Skills gaps, particularly those who do not want to invest extended time in school.
4. **Work with provincial and territorial jurisdictions to create additional learning resources for Essential Skills upgrading, particularly in the area of document use.** Fill resource gaps with quality learning tools that meet the needs of EBSM clients.
5. **Market Essential Skills to employers.** Once employers integrate Essential Skills into their human resource practices, it will become widely accepted by clients. Although some large employers are using Essential Skills, a critical mass has not yet formed to create the momentum required.

METHODOLOGY

PROJECT DESIGN

Service Provider Selection: Working with an advisory committee comprised of Bow Valley College and regional and national HRSDC representatives, two regions in Ontario and British Columbia were selected to participate in this study. HRSDC identified local service providers who deliver EBSM as candidates for participation. The organizations serve a variety of populations using a range of service delivery models (e.g., full-service employment counselling, primarily service needs determination and referral, etc.).

Service providers received an e-mail invitation from Bow Valley College in February 2005 and a phone call to determine their interest. All 13 service providers agreed to participate. Another four joined later, bringing the total number of service providers to 17.

Figure 1.1: Project participation

Region	Community	Service Provider (*joined project in May 2005)	Number of Clients
London, On	Woodstock	Community Employment Services	16
	St. Thomas	Employment Services Elgin	17
	Exeter	Exeter Adult Learning Centre	12
	Woodstock	Fanshawe Job Finding Club	6
	London	Goodwill Career Centre	19
	Strathroy	Government Access Information Network	16
	London	London Unemployment Help Centre	10
	London	WIL Employment Connections	62
Subtotal			160
Kingston, On	Kingston	Kingston Employment and Youth Services	31
	Subtotal		
Vancouver, BC	Vancouver	Family Services of Greater Vancouver - Vancouver East ERC	37
	Coquitlam	RDK Career Services	35
	Vancouver	SUCCESS	32
	Vancouver	YWCA of Greater Vancouver – ERC	32
Subtotal			136
Kootenays, BC	Nelson	Kootenay Career Development Society	37
	Trail	The Greater Trail Community Skills Centre	26
	Cranbrook	Cranbrook Boys and Girls Club – Job Links	16
	Cranbrook	Job Seekers	29
Subtotal			108
Total			436

Essential Skills Training: In February 2005, Bow Valley College conducted a two-day working session to design an Essential Skills workshop specific to the project. Three trainers were responsible for delivering the workshop to participating service organizations. Two came from Colleges - Douglas College and the College of the Rockies

– and the third was an experienced Essential Skills trainer from Ontario. During March and April, the two-day workshop was delivered to participating organizations in their local communities. The training provided staff with an overview of the project, an introduction to Essential Skills and TOWES, and suggestions for using test results to assist clients. An abbreviated one-day workshop was delivered in Cranbrook and a half-day workshop was delivered to the four organizations that joined the project in May, facilitated by the Fanshawe College Essential Skills team. Some of the staff who received training passed along information to colleagues unable to attend.

Client Selection: Following training, service providers identified and invited all eligible clients to participate in TOWES testing and follow-up. Their primary target was current EI claimants or reachback clients (i.e., they have either had an EI claim in the past three years, or maternity/parental claim in the past five years). These clients would be eligible for and are likely to participate in one of the four Employment Benefits (Skills Development, Targeted Wage Subsidies, Self Employment, and Job Creation Partnerships). The secondary target was non-insured participants (i.e., any unemployed Canadian who is not included in the primary target described above). These clients, while ineligible for Employment Benefits, can access Support Measures such as Employment Assistance Services (EAS) such as resume writing, job finding clubs, etc. The project goal was to have 70 percent EI claimants and reachback clients, and 30 percent non-insured participants. As participation rates were not tracked, the percentage of potential clients who declined the offer to participate is unknown

Testing: With their local college/TOWES distributor, service providers organized group testing sessions during April and May. The TOWES G2 test, which tests three of nine Essential Skill (reading text, document use and numeracy), was the standard test offered, although service providers were encouraged to use the G1, which test the same three Essential Skills using less complex questions, if the client had poor English skills or had a very low educational status and work history. TOWES testing generally took place onsite at the service providers' location with approximately 10 clients at a time and the test was invigilated through the college. There were some exceptions. For example, Bow Valley College trained service providers in Nelson, B.C. to do their own test invigilation as they are located far from their college partner. In addition to client testing, several EAS providers' staff members took the TOWES test to give them an opportunity to experience the test first-hand. Their results are not included in the study.

Marking and Test Results: Tests were couriered to Bow Valley College where they were marked and quality checked by a team of professional markers. Turn-around time was approximately three days. Results were returned to the local college or the service

provider by CSPoste, a secure e-mail process. The e-mail included a group report for the service provider and an individual results report for each participant (see Appendix V). For the purposes of this project, the standard TOWES individual results report was revamped to make the information easier to understand and to include two new pieces of information:

- Local labour market information - Regional Labour Market Information Analysts (LMIA) with HRSDC provided a list of demand occupations for each region (see Appendix IV). In three of four regions, the list was tailored by HRSDC based upon assumptions about the skills of clients; in many cases, highly skilled jobs such as pharmacologists were removed. Also, LMIA cautioned that the lists were based on labour market information that may be several years out of date (it is not known why the information available to researchers through the LMIA was dated). For the purposes of this project, the Essential Skills scores for each occupation (where available) were cross-referenced with the client's scores. All occupations with Essential Skills scores were listed on the TOWES Results Report.
- National occupational list - The client's test scores were cross-referenced with all Canadian occupations with an Essential Skills profile (this includes approximately half of the NOC list; the other half will be available within the next few years). All occupations that matched or were less than the client's score were listed on the TOWES Results Report.

Client Follow-up: Service providers met individually with clients to discuss test results. They were encouraged to integrate the information into their normal service delivery process.

Online Surveys: Clients were asked to complete a short online survey directly after follow-up with the service provider. Staff completed an online survey at the end of the project. These surveys gathered perceptions regarding the value and use of Essential Skills tools.

Supplementary Service Provider Surveys: Client participation in the online survey was lower than anticipated and the data was sometimes incomplete so Bow Valley College asked service providers to fill in gaps with a brief supplementary survey of demographic data (e.g., type of EBSM).

Telephone Interviews: Fifteen service providers participated in a one-on-one telephone interview with a Bow Valley College representative near the end of the project to collect observations and suggestions regarding the application of Essential Skills tools with

EBSM clients. The interviews were based upon pre-determined open-ended questions and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.

In summary, data was gathered using five methods:

1. TOWES test survey (standard two-page questionnaire at the beginning of each test);
2. Online client survey;
3. Online staff survey;
4. Supplementary service provider survey; and
5. Telephone interview with service providers

RESPONSE RATES

TOWES Testing: In total, 436 clients participated in the project; they took a TOWES test (which included a standard two-page questionnaire to collect demographic data), returned for follow-up and were asked to complete an online survey. This exceeded the target of 400 by about 10 percent and provided a large sample size to populate the data pool. It is not known how many clients refused to participate. However, anecdotal evidence collected during surveys and conversations with service providers suggests that clients with low levels of academic achievement most frequently declined.

Online Surveys: In total, 292 clients completed the online survey, which represents a response rate of 66 percent. It is difficult to determine how many staff members were involved in the project; 48 completed the online survey.

Supplementary Service Provider Surveys: All 17 service providers completed the supplementary survey.

Telephone Interviews: In total, 15 of 17 service providers responded to the invitation to participate in a telephone interview.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

Quality of research is measured according to standards of validity and reliability.

Validity asks whether the study's methodology is the right choice for the research question it seeks to answer. The objective of this research study was to gain insight into whether Essential Skills tools were helpful to EBSM clients. Clients and staff were given the opportunity to 'test-drive' Essential Skills tools in a real-life service environment and data was collected using a variety of methods, ensuring the validity of the study.

Simply put, reliability asks whether a different researcher who follows the same study format will produce the same findings. Quantitative data such as demographics and test scores were gathered using surveys with simple closed questions, which leave little room for interpretation by the researcher. Where possible, qualitative data was also quantified (e.g., value was rated by respondents).

However, several factors may impact overall reliability:

Participant selection: Project constraints required the use of nonprobability sampling rather than probability sampling to select study targets. In plain language, participants were not randomly selected. Service providers were encouraged to give priority to EI/reachback clients, the test-takers had to be volunteers, and service providers were encouraged to recruit people with the capacity to complete the test (i.e., people without significant learning disabilities). To make statistically accurate inferences to a larger population, study subjects must be randomly selected. As a result, caution should be exercised when extrapolating data from this project to the larger population of EBSM clients.

Occupational profiles: Essential Skills occupational profiles are only available for approximately half of the occupations on the NOC list. These occupations are typically front-line and require a Grade 12 education and some training. It was not possible to compare Essential Skills proficiencies to the requirements of higher skill occupations as these occupations have not been profiled yet.

NOC coding: Limited information about the clients' past and desired occupations makes accurate NOC coding challenging.

List of demand occupations: Labour Market Information Analysts were asked to create a list of local demand occupations without the benefit of consistent methodology between

regions. Also, labour market information varied in quality. For example, the list of demand occupations in the Kootenays is several years out of date and includes both the East and West Kootenays on one list, even though they are geographically and economically different. Service providers noted that it was too generic to be useful. This may influence the comparison of participants' skills and local labour market needs.

Researcher bias: Telephone interviews with service providers were based on open-ended questions and it is possible that the conversation and the interpretation of the results were influenced by the researcher's perceptions.

SURVEY FINDINGS

The findings in this report have been reviewed by Dr. Theresa Kline, a psychometric expert with the University of Calgary’s Department of Psychology, who states that the interpretation of the data is appropriate (see Appendix VI).

STATEMENT OF WORK

Survey findings correspond with HRSDC’s statement of work, which can be organized by two main research activities:

- I. Test clients and create an Essential Skills client profile.
- II. Survey service providers on the implementation of Essential Skills applications.

I . TEST CLIENTS AND CREATE AN ESSENTIAL SKILLS PROFILE

HRSDC requested an Essential Skills “client profile” that includes the following information:

- Demographic data:
 - age, gender, designated group status, immigrant status and educational background.
- Client proficiencies:
 - Client proficiencies in three Essential Skills areas.
 - A comparison of client proficiencies across the four benefits and/or EAS intervention.
- Occupational and labour market comparisons:
 - A comparison of clients’ chosen occupations with their Essential Skills.
 - A comparison of clients’ Essential Skill levels with local labour market requirements.

Bow Valley College added another category of information:

- Client perceptions of Essential Skills

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Of the 436 TOWES tests that were completed, 61 percent are from EI/reachback clients. A specific effort was made to include as many EI/reachback clients as possible¹.

More than 70 percent of project participants are currently involved in EAS interventions rather than Employment Benefits. EAS interventions include services such as employment counseling, job finding clubs and case management, which are a first step for many clients who are referred to Employment Benefits. For example, a client receiving counseling may choose to pursue further training with Skills Development funding.

Figure 2.1: Program participation

Program Type	All Ppts		EI/Reachback	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Employment Benefits				
▪ Skills Development	40	9%	37	14%
▪ Targeted Wage Subsidies	4	1%	3	1%
▪ Self-employment	10	2%	10	4%
▪ Job Creation Partnerships	20	5%	17	6%
EAS Interventions	317	73%	189	71%
Undeclared	45	10%	10	4%
Total	436	100%	266	100%

Approximately 60 percent of participants in this study are female, whereas about 45 percent of labour force participants and EBSM participants are female. It is not known what effect, if any, the over-representation of female participation has on the study. However a report titled Learning a Living -First Results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (Statistics Canada and OECD, 2005) states that the differences between males and females in adult skills are small.

¹ According to the 2004 EI Monitoring and Assessment Report, approximately 76 percent of all individuals in Canada who participated in EBSM are EI/reachback clients.

Figure 2.2: Gender and labour force participation

Gender	All Ppts	EI/Reachback	2004 EI Monitoring & Assessment Report*	2004 Total Canadian Labour Force**	2004 Unemployed Canadian Labour Force**
Male	41%	39%	56%	53%	56%
Female	58%	60%	44%	47%	44%
Undeclared	1%	1%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Source: HRSDC 2004 EI Monitoring and Assessment Report: <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/ei/reports/eimar.shtml>. August 4, 2005

**Source: Statistics Canada website: <http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/labor07a.htm?sdi=both%20sexes> August 2, 2005

This project was more likely to attract mature workers. Just over half of the project participants are between the ages of 25 and 45, which is on par with EBSM statistics. However, the percentage of 45 to 65 year-olds is approximately 10 percent higher than average.

Representation by the youth population is six percent lower than national EBSM averages. This is likely a reflection of the type of organizations invited to be part of the study; services for the youth population are often provided through separate venues. This study did not seek to target a specific age group and only one of the participating organizations works exclusively with young people.

Figure 2.3: Age distribution by percentage

Age distribution	All Ppts	EI/Reachback	2004 EI Monitoring & Assessment Report*	2004 Unemployed Canadian Labour Force**
16 - 24 years of age	11%	6%	17%	31%
25 - 45 years of age	55%	54%	52%	43%
45 - 65 years of age	34%	40%	24%	26%
Undeclared	0%	0%	7%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Source: HRSDC 2004 EI Monitoring and Assessment Report: <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/ei/reports/eimar.shtml>. August 4, 2005

**Source: Statistics Canada website: <http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/labor07a.htm?sdi=both%20sexes> August 2, 2005

Designated group representation data was unavailable from several organizations so this picture should not be considered complete. However, visible minority participation at 16 percent was more than triple the national average for EBSM. Participation by Persons with Disabilities was the same as the EBSM average at four percent. Only two project participants were Aboriginal.

Figure 2.4: Designated group status

Designated Group Status	All Ppts		EI/Reachback		2004 EI Monitoring & Assessment Report*
	Number of Clients	Percentage of Clients	Number of Clients	Percentage of Clients	Percentage of Clients
Aboriginal People	2	.5%	1	1%	7.2% ²
Visible Minorities	68	16%	22	8%	5.4%
Persons with Disabilities	19	4%	5	2%	4.4%
Undeclared**	347	88%	238	89%	N/A

*Source: HRSDC 2004 EI Monitoring and Assessment Report: <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/ei/reports/eimar.shtml>. August 4, 2005

** Undeclared means the data was not available or the individuals are not part of a designated group.

Figure 2.5: Years in Canada (immigrants)

Length of time in Canada	All Ppts	EI/Reachback
Less than 1 year	13%	0%
1 year to 2 years	6%	2%
2 years to 3 years	7%	8%
3 years to 5 years	17%	12%
5 years to 10 years	22%	20%
More than 10 years	29%	54%
Undeclared	6%	4%
Total	100%	100%

Nearly 27 percent of project participants are to Canada and approximately half of these individuals have been here five years or more.

Figure 2.5b: Distribution of Immigrant Participants by Region

Region	Total Number of Clients	Total Number of Immigrants	Immigrant Representation (%)
London, ON	160	49	31%
Kingston, ON	31	3	10%
Vancouver, BC	137	53	39%
Kootenays, BC	108	12	11%
Sub-Totals	436	117	27%

Vancouver had the highest rate of Immigrant participation, followed by London. Kingston and the Kootenays had similar participation rates.

² HRSDC negotiates agreements with Aboriginal organizations to deliver programs for Aboriginal people at the community level. Excluding these agreements, Aboriginal participation is 2.1 percent for Employment Benefits and 5.3 percent for Employment Services.

Figure 2.6: Mother tongue

Mother Tongue	All Ppts	EI/Reachback
English	322	214
French	6	4
Italian	2	2
German	1	0
Polish	1	1
Spanish	23	4
Punjabi	3	1
Chinese	29	9
Portuguese	0	0
Ukrainian	1	1
Dutch	0	0
Greek	0	0
Other	34	20
Undeclared	14	10
Total	436	266

At 74 percent, English is the dominant mother tongue of all participants. Chinese and Spanish were the next most common languages (approximately 5 to 6 percent each) first learned at home in childhood and still understood.

Level of education statistics indicate that project participants are somewhat better educated than the Canadian population. According to the 2001 Census, 23 percent of Canadians between the ages of 24 to 65 do not have a high school education. In comparison, 13 percent of participants in this study had less than high school, despite the fact that the population included a younger group (16 to 23-year olds) who are more likely to have not finished high school. The groups higher-than-average educational attainment may have skewed results as previous research suggests that educational attainment is a key determinant of cognitive skills proficiencies including adult literacy and numeracy (e.g., Kirsch *et al.*, First Results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey, Statistics Canada and OECD, 2005) However, beyond average scores, higher levels of education do not necessarily imply higher proficiencies for all as the quality of education may vary between regions. This is also consistent with the research suggesting that the impact of education cannot be measured only in terms of the number of years an individual is exposed to it (Coombs and Ahmed, 1974). This being said, the educational attainment figures do suggest that the sample was not comprised solely of those who might most benefit from Essential Skills interventions.

A standard TOWES questionnaire collects data about the highest level of schooling the test-taker's mother has completed, as this has been shown to have an impact on educational attainment.

Figure 2.7: Level of education

Level of Education	All Ppts		EI/Reachback		2001 Census* Canadian Pop. Aged 24 to 65
	Number	Percentile	Number	Percentile	Percentile
Less than high school	58	13%	35	13%	23%
High school	122	28%	79	30%	24%
Trade or vocational certificate	34	8%	20	8%	
Apprenticeship certificate	8	2%	5	2%	
CEGEP diploma or certificate	15	3%	11	4%	
Non-university certificate or diploma from school of nursing, technical institute or other such institution	65	15%	47	17%	31%
University transfer program	11	3%	6	2%	
University degree	118	27%	58	22%	22%
Undeclared	5	1%	5	2%	N/A
Total	436	100%	266	100%	100%

*Source: Statistics Canada website:

<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/highlight/Education/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&View=1b&Code=0&Table=2a&StartRec=1&Sort=2&B1=Distribution&B2=Both>. August 2, 2005

NOTABLE FINDINGS

- Of the 436 project participants, 61 percent are EI/Reachback clients. Seventy-percent are engaged in EAS interventions.
- Sixty percent are female, which is about 15 percent higher than EBSM averages across the country. The sample group is also slightly more mature than the average.
- Visible minority representation is 16 percent, which is triple the national average for EBSM. Participation by Persons with Disabilities is on par at four percent. Only .5 percent of all participants are Aboriginals.
- Twenty-seven percent of all participants are immigrants to Canada. The majority have been here three years or longer.
- English is the dominant mother tongue of all participants, followed by Chinese and Spanish at approximately five percent.
- Project participants are somewhat better educated than the Canadian population. Nearly one-quarter of Canadians between 24 and 65 have less than a high school education. Only 13 percent of project participants have less than high school.

CLIENT PROFICIENCIES

TOWES measures proficiency in three of nine Essential Skills domains: reading text, document use and numeracy. In each domain, proficiency is denoted on a rising scale ranging from level 1 to level 5. Each score means the test-taker has an 80 per cent chance of successfully completing tasks at that level of difficulty. Average proficiency scores are determined by dividing the sum of all scores by the number of test takers. For example, test results at 2, 2, 3, and 4 would be assigned an average score of 2.75.

As presented Figure 3.1, test results indicate that participant proficiencies in the areas of reading text and numeracy are only moderately lower than level three, the internationally recognized standard to meet the requirements of a knowledge-based economy, and the Canadian average. However, troublingly weak proficiencies are demonstrated in the area of document use skills where the average scores are almost a full skill level lower.

These results suggest that EBSM clients have found some success at developing reading and numeracy skills through formal and informal learning situations as their scores are only moderately lower than national averages. However, it appears that study participants are not acquiring adequate document use skills through these same channels.

These results also suggest that poor document use skills significantly impact labour market engagement, as this is the only skill area where EBSM client's scored significantly lower than the national average.

Essential Skills scores vary little between regions and programs, although Self-employment clients have the highest scores. EI/reachback clients consistently score slightly higher than the all project participants combined but are still lower than the Canadian average.

Figure 3.1: Average Essential Skills scores

Average Score	All Ppts	EI/Reachback	Canadians Aged 16 to 65*
Reading Text	2.86	2.94	3.13
Document Use	2.13	2.16	3.12
Numeracy	2.83	2.90	2.95

*Source: *Learning a Living: First Results of the Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey, 2005*

Figure 3.2: Average Essential Skills Scores in four regions

Average Score	London		Kingston		Vancouver		Kootenays	
	All ppts	EI/R	All ppts	EI/R	All ppts	EI/R	All ppts	EI/R
Reading Text	2.89	2.95	2.74	3.00	2.74	2.85	3.03	3.07
Document Use	2.18	2.20	2.16	2.33	2.05	2.11	2.15	2.17
Numeracy	2.92	3.00	2.65	3.00	2.75	2.77	2.83	2.89

Figure 3.3: Average Essential Skills scores by program

Average Score	EAS (317 ppts)	Skills Development (40 ppts)	Targeted Wage Subsidies (4 ppts)	Self-employment (10 ppts)	Job Creation Partnerships (20 ppts)
Reading Text	2.84	2.78	2.50	3.20	3.10
Document Use	2.09	2.10	3.00	2.90	2.30
Numeracy	2.84	2.78	2.75	3.20	3.00

Figure 3.4: Average Essential Skills scores by immigrant status

Average Score	All Ppts	Canadian born	Born outside of Canada
Reading Text	2.86	3.07	2.31
Document Use	2.13	2.28	1.74
Numeracy	2.83	2.92	2.58

NOTABLE FINDINGS

- Weak document use skills are prevalent among EBSM clients and may be a key reason they are unemployed.
- Averaged Essential Skills scores are less than level 3 in most areas and the lowest average score is in document use. There is little variation between programs or regions. EI/reachback clients consistently score slightly higher than those who were not EI/reachback eligible.
- Canadian-born EBSM participants demonstrated higher Essential Skills proficiency than those born in other countries.

OCCUPATIONAL AND LABOUR MARKET COMPARISONS

Interpretation notes: NOC coding was based on limited information from participants regarding their past and desired occupations and therefore may have a margin of error. Also, data in this section includes only participants whose occupations have an Essential Skills score. These are typically front-end occupations that require high school and some training.

When project participants took the TOWES test, they were asked about their most recent occupation. This information was used to determine that occupation’s NOC code. Participant scores were then compared with the Essential Skills scores of their past occupation. The results indicate that participants, on average, have the Essential Skills proficiency required in reading text and numeracy, but that there is a significant skills deficit in the area of document use. Participant scores are nearly a half a level behind occupational requirements.

Figure 4.1: Participant scores compared to occupational scores for previous occupation

Previous Occupation	Average Ppt Score	Average Essential Skills Requirement	Variance
Reading Text	2.85	2.62	0.23
Document Use	2.08	2.53	- 0.45
Numeracy	2.79	2.52	0.27

Similarly, desired occupation was compared to participant scores. Although the data pool is slightly different (only participants who stated their desired occupation are included), the findings are consistent with the numbers above. Again, document use skills fall far behind occupational requirements, even for front-line jobs.

Figure 4.2: Participant scores compared to occupational scores for desired occupation

Desired Occupation	Average Ppt Score	Average Essential Skills Requirement	Variance
Reading Text	2.80	2.74	0.16
Document Use	2.00	2.70	- 0.70
Numeracy	2.85	2.68	0.20

Participant scores were compared to local labour market requirements. In the following graphs, the zero line represents the average local labour market Essential Skills proficiency requirements based on the list provided by HRSDC. Average proficiency requirements were calculated dividing the sum of the requirements of all profiled occupations by the number of profiled occupations. For example, a list of occupations

that require skills at levels 3, 3, 3, 4 are assigned an average requirement of 3.25. Participants who scored 3.25 or higher are above the line and those who scored lower than 3.25 are below the line.

For those occupations that have been profiled (i.e., front-line occupations), most participants meet the local labour market requirement in reading text and numeracy. However, there is a significant skill deficit in the area of document use.

Figure 4.3: Percentage of participants who meet local labour market requirements for front-line occupations

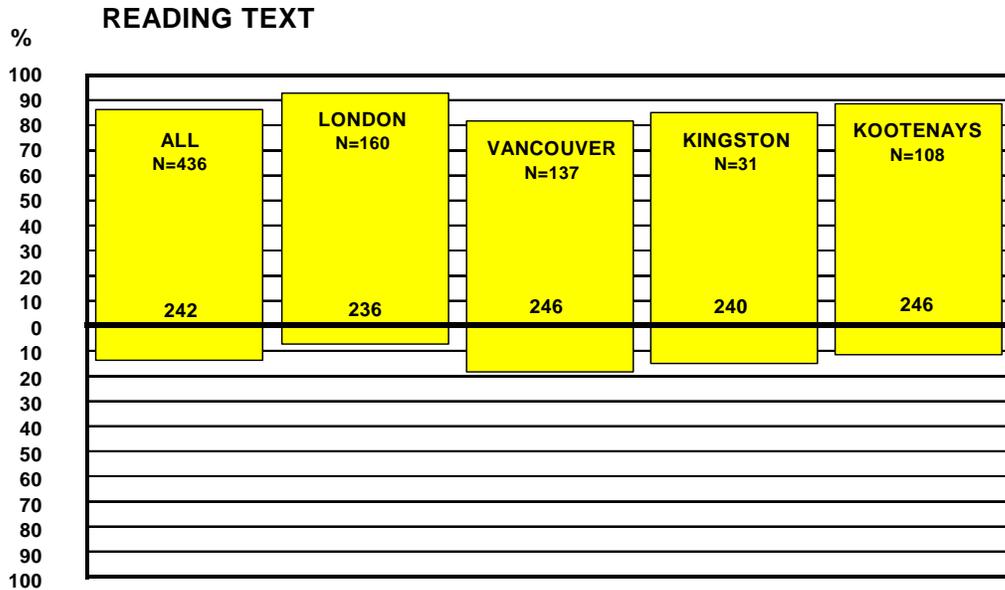


Figure 4.4: Percentage of participants who meet local labour market requirements for front-line occupations

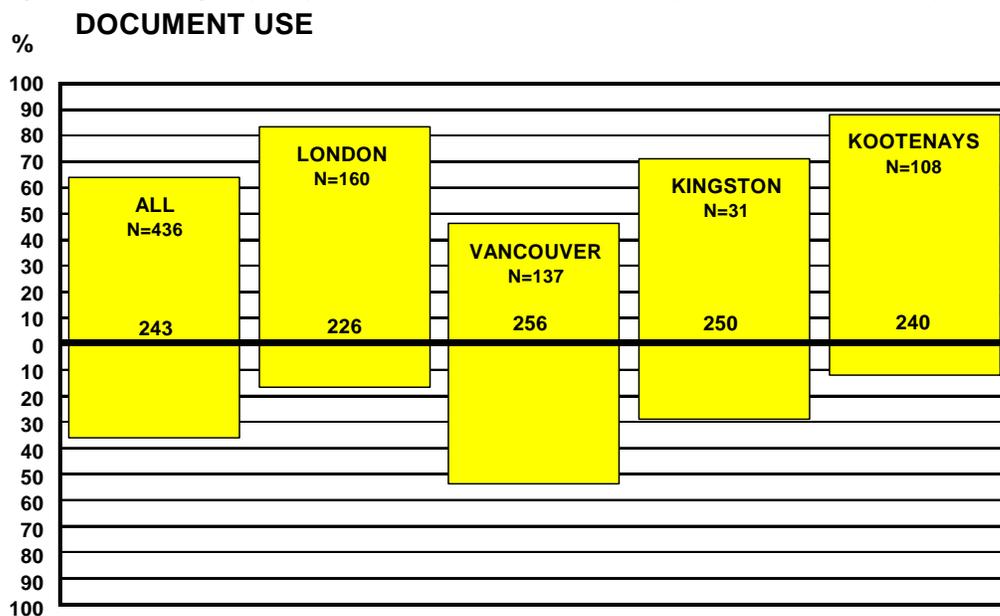
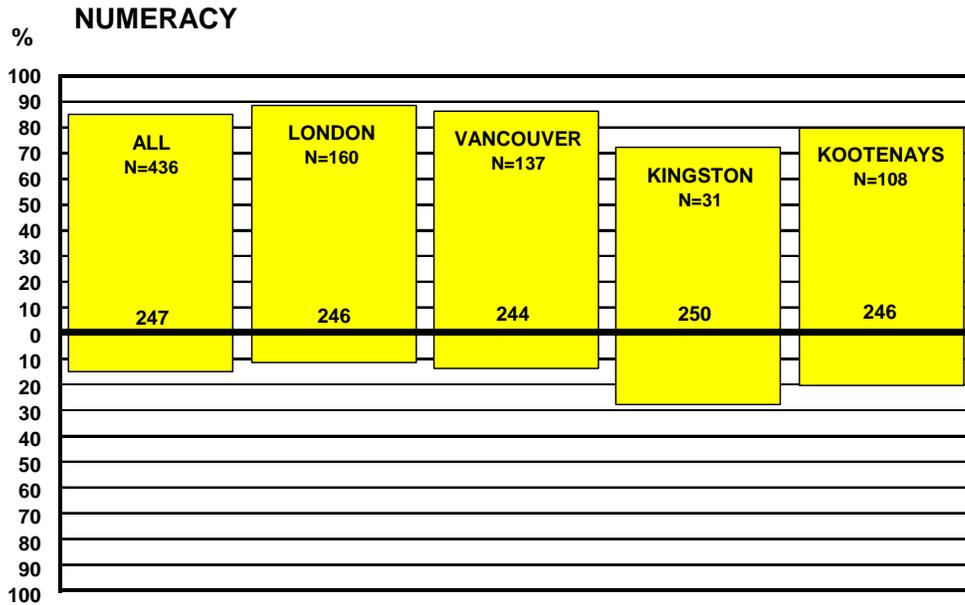


Figure 4.5: Percentage of participants who meet local labour market requirements for front-line occupations



The lists of demand occupations provided by HRSDC may not accurately reflect current local labour market needs. A specific methodology for creating the lists was not utilized, some lists are several years out of date and some do not capture the unique characteristics of a specific community within a larger region. Therefore, a more accurate picture of labour market demands is found by comparing participant scores with level 3 skills, which is the internationally recognized benchmark for meeting the challenges of today’s world. According to the OECD and Statistics Canada, level 3 is considered a suitable minimum level for coping with the increasing demands of a knowledge-based society and information economy. For comparison, Canadian averages from the most recent Adult Literacy and Lifeskills Survey are also featured.

The data also indicates that a significant percentage of participants do not meet the level 3 standard, particularly in the area of document use.

In the following graphs, the zero line consistently represents level 3 skills. Participants who tested at level 3, 4 or 5 are above the line. Those who tested at levels 1 or 2 are below the line.

Figure 4.6: Percentage of participants who meet the requirements of a knowledge-based economy.

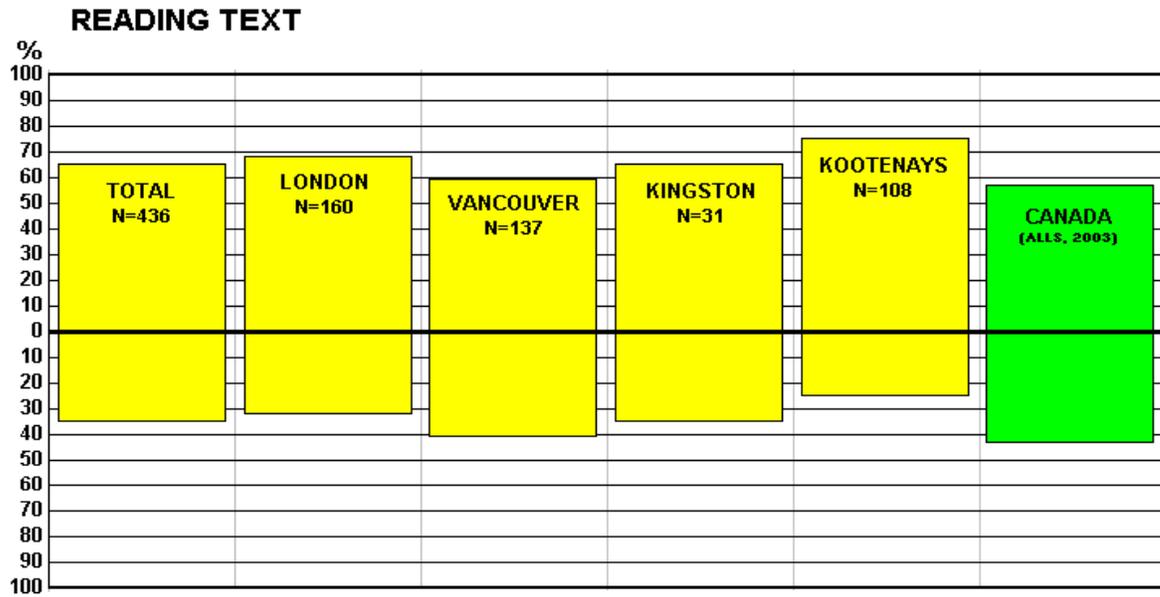


Figure 4.7: Percentage of participants who meet the requirements of a knowledge-based economy

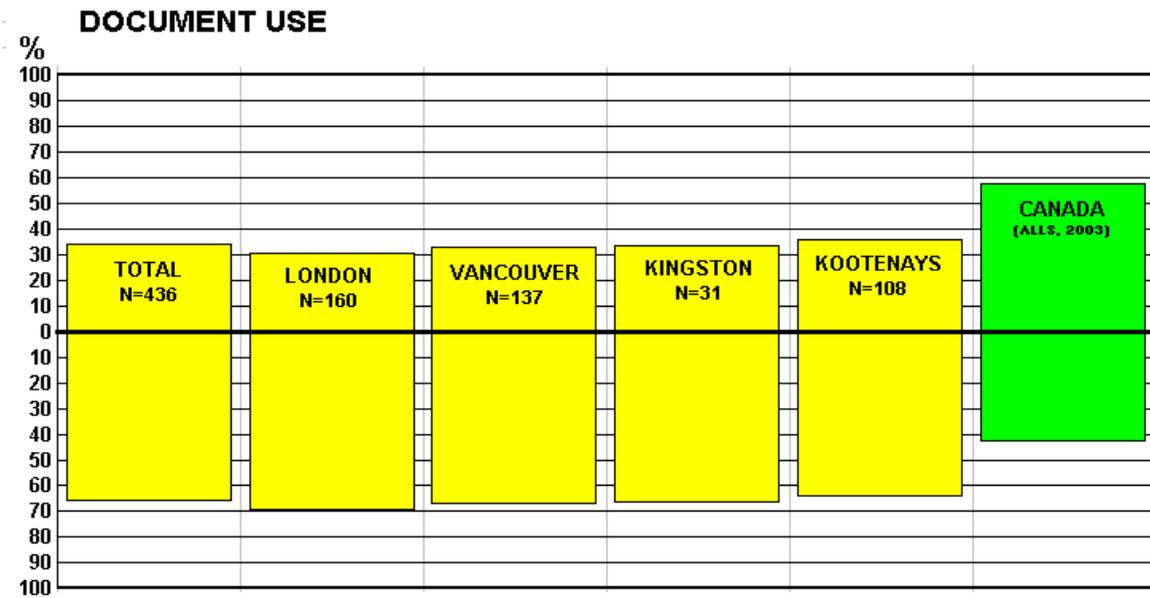
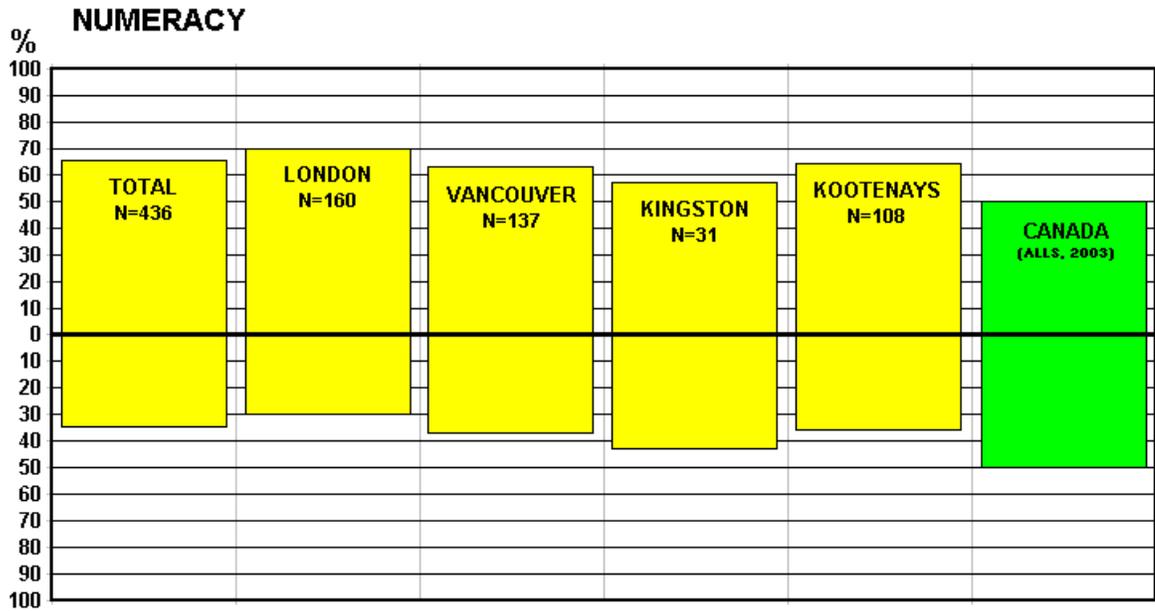


Figure 4.8: Percentage of participants who meet the requirements of a knowledge-based economy



NOTABLE FINDINGS

- On average, participants have the Essential Skills proficiency required to perform their past occupation and their desired occupation in two areas: reading text and numeracy. However, document use skills are far behind occupational requirements, even for front-line occupations.
- Based on the available data, a significant proportion of participants meet the reading text and numeracy requirements of front-line occupations in their local labour market. However, there is a significant skills deficit in document use where approximately 38 percent of all participants scored less than the average local labour market requirement. It is not known how, or if, the non-standard use of LMI or the use of out-of-date data influenced these outcomes.
- Level 3 skills are the internationally accepted benchmark for meeting the challenges of today's knowledge-based economy. Approximately 65 percent of participants meet or exceed level 3 in reading text and numeracy, but only about 33 percent meet or exceed level 3 in document use. Sixty-seven percent scored level 1 or 2 and do not have the document use skills necessary for success in today's world.

CLIENT PERCEPTIONS OF ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Client perceptions are derived from the online survey, which participants completed directly after a conversation with their employment counselor to discuss the results of their TOWES test. Sixty-seven percent of a possible 436 participants responded.

Ninety-four percent of participants said they understand what Essential Skills are.

Figure 5.1: Perception about whether TOWES was helpful when planning a career or finding a job

TOWES helpful to plan career or find job?	All	EI
Yes	32%	33%
Somewhat	32%	36%
No	16%	16%
Not sure yet	18%	14%
Undeclared	2%	1%
Total	100%	100%

When asked if they believe TOWES will help them to plan a career or find a job, 65 percent responded with a ‘yes’ or ‘somewhat’. Sixteen percent responded ‘no’.

Similarly, 63 percent said they would recommend the TOWES test to a friend who was planning a career or looking for work.

Satisfaction levels were further analyzed to determine if there is a relationship with other variables. The data revealed no significant correlation between perception of value and age, immigrant status, length of time looking for work, or time spent discussing test results with their employment counselor. For details, please refer to Appendix I.

Figure 5.2: Time spent discussing test results with counsellor.

Length of time spent discussing TOWES results		
Less than 10 minutes	10 to 20 minutes	More than 20 minutes
70%	14%	16%

Project participants spent a relatively brief amount of time discussing their Essential Skills scores with their employment counselor. Seventy percent of project participants estimated it was 10 minutes or less.

Following discussions, 55 percent say their plans did not change as a result of doing TOWES. Forty percent say their plans are similar but clearer now and only 4 percent indicate that their plans have changed. It is not specifically known what triggered the change of plans for the 4 percent of participants who indicated that their plans had changed after taking TOWES.

In terms of next steps in their career path, responses are divided. Forty-five percent want to find a job and 25 percent want to return to school. A relatively large number (31 percent) either want to do more research or don’t know what their plans are. These numbers were the same, regardless of whether the participants were EI recipients or not.

Figure 5.3: Whether people changed their plans after doing TOWES

Change mind about next steps after doing TOWES?	All Participants	EI only (online survey)
No, plans didn't change	56%	56%
Plans are similar, just somewhat clearer	40%	39%
Yes, plans are very different now	4%	4%
Undeclared	N/A	1%
Total	100%	100%

Figure 5.4: Next step in clients' career paths

Next step in career path	All	EI
Find a job	45%	42%
Do more research	25%	26%
Return to school	24%	25%
Don't know	6%	6%
Undeclared	N/A	1%
Total	100%	100%

In terms of job search, 62 percent of all survey participants know which jobs match their current skills. This may be partly because the TOWES Results Report compared the clients' Essential Skills scores to local labour market needs and national occupations. Forty-nine percent said they know where they can find more information about jobs they are interested in.

In terms of training, 33 percent of participants say they need more training but only 24 percent intend to return to school. Thirty-nine percent know what type of training they need and 28 percent say they know where they can get training.

Figure 5.5: Statements regarding next steps

Which statements are true after reviewing your TOWES test results	All	EI
I need more training	33%	33%
I know what kind of training I need	39%	34%
I know where I can get training	28%	31%
I know which jobs match my current skills	62%	62%
I know where I can find more information about jobs I am interested in	49%	48%
None of the above	11%	10%
Other	10%	8%

Note: Participants were asked to check all categories that apply so the total exceeds 100%.

When asked which sources of information about Essential Skills and TOWES were useful, 80 percent of participants said they liked discussions with an employment

counselor. The next most useful sources were the TOWES Results Report at 57 percent, followed by the TOWES Test Preparation Guide at 47 percent.

For this project, the TOWES Results Report listed two websites where participants could find out more about Essential Skills: www15.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca and measureup.towes.com. A relatively large number of participants (67 percent) said they will visit the website(s) to find out more information about specific occupations. Twenty-two percent said ‘maybe’ and only 9 percent said ‘no’, indicating that there is willingness to use online resources. Only 3 percent said they do not have access to a computer.

NOTABLE FINDINGS

- Sixty-five percent of participants felt TOWES was valuable and a similar percentage said they would recommend it to a friend. The survey tools did not collect specific information about why the tool was perceived as being of value.
- Fifty-five percent say their plans did not change as a result of doing TOWES. Forty percent say their plans are similar but clearer now and only four percent indicate that their plans have changed.
- Forty-five percent want to find a job, 25 percent want to return to school and 31 percent either want to do more research or don’t know what their plans are.
- Discussion with an employment counselor is the most popular way to learn about Essential skills.

II. Survey service providers on the implementation of Essential Skills applications

Bow Valley College was asked to survey service providers on the implementation of Essential Skills applications. Specific information included:

- Perceptions about Essential Skills
 - Knowledge and understanding of HRSDC’s Essential Skills and Workplace Literacy (ESWL) initiative.
- Implementation Issues
 - Capacity to use and implement Essential Skills applications (e.g., TOWES testing, Essential Skills profiles, etc.).
 - Ways to identify and target clients for an Essential Skills intervention.
 - Means to promote Essential Skills and raise awareness among individuals.

PERCEPTIONS OF ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Forty-seven staff members from 17 organizations completed the online survey. They are experienced career development professionals; more than 80 percent have been working in the field for more than three years.

Staff like TOWES and Essential Skills information and find it to be a useful tool for helping clients.

They also think their clients find them useful. In each case, approximately 80 percent rank it three or more out of five. Only four percent find it not useful.

When asked in an open-ended question about what they like most about TOWES and Essential skills, one dominant theme emerged. Staff like that TOWES provides an objective and accurate assessment of workplace skills. Clients can compare their scores to an inventory of occupational profiles to clearly identify strengths and gap areas from an employer’s point of view. The test offered new insights for both the client and the counselor into skills that were not documented academically and skill deficits that were previously undetected.

Figure 6.1: Online survey participation by region

Region	Percentage of Survey Participants
London	30%
Kingston	0%
Kootenays	21%
Vancouver	49%
Total	100%

Figure 6.2: Staff perceptions regarding usefulness of TOWES test and Essential Skill information.

Range of perceptions	Clients	Staff
1 Not useful	4%	4%
2	14%	16%
3	43%	34%
4	25%	32%
5 Very useful	14%	14%

When asked if they would use TOWES with clients in the future, the majority (58 percent) responded ‘yes’. Thirty percent remain undecided. When asked in an open-ended question what their reservations might be, responses fell into six main categories (in rank order):

1. Comments about test validity and design (e.g., TOWES measures only three of nine Essential Skills, authentic workplace materials features small print);
2. Uncertainty about how to use test scores in client counseling, especially if scores are low;
3. Concerns about the current lack of information available on professional occupations;
4. Caution about TOWES being used as a tool by employers to screen out people who don’t meet standards;
5. Challenges around the group testing format; and
6. Cost.

The first two responses may indicate an information gap. Just over half the staff who completed the online survey attended the Essential Skills project training. In many cases, these individuals were responsible for training their colleagues back at the office who were also involved in the project. Also, the four groups from London area that joined the project late received a half-day of training rather than two days. Of the people who did have an opportunity to attend training, all of them found it very or somewhat useful. No one said they did not find it of value.

Figure 6.3: Knowledge of Essential Skills

Range of Knowledge	Prior to project	After the project
1 Unfamiliar	27%	0%
2	39%	4%
3	11%	21%
4	14%	48%
5 Very familiar	9%	27%
Total	100%	100%

Participation in the project had a dramatic influence on knowledge of Essential Skills. Prior to the project, staff ranked their knowledge as very low but by the end, 75 percent rated it as a four or five out of five.

Although most clients said they spent less than 10 minutes discussing test results, staff had a different perception. Sixty percent said they spent more than 20 minutes and it was not unusual to see estimated times of 30 and 40 minutes.

Figure 6.4: Time discussing test results

Length of time	Staff	Clients
Less than 10 minutes	0%	70%
10 to 20 minutes	40%	14%
More than 20 minutes	60%	16%

Staff liked the information about Essential Skills provided through the project such as the TOWES Results Report and the TOWES Preparation Guide. In general, they were even more enthusiastic than participants. For both staff and participants, discussions with the employment service providers were most frequently selected as useful.

When asked in an open-ended question how TOWES and Essential Skills information could be improved, two primary themes emerged. 1) Professional occupations need to be profiled so a more complete picture of Canada's labour market is available and 2) staff would benefit from more training on TOWES and how to debrief the results with clients. Secondary themes included the following suggestions: reformat the occupational lists so clients with low scores are not deflated when no or few jobs match their scores, make TOWES less trades-oriented and gender specific, offer a certificate as a form of credential, and use larger print in the workplace documents on the TOWES test.

NOTABLE FINDINGS

- Four percent of staff do not find TOWES and Essential Skills information useful. Approximately half rate it four or five, out of five. They like the fact that it provides an objective and accurate assessment of workplace skills from an employer's point of view and that there is data on at least half of Canadian occupations from an Essential Skills perspective.
- Despite their enthusiasm, thirty percent are undecided about whether they would use TOWES with clients in the future. They need additional information about the test's validity and how to use the scores to assist clients. They are also concerned that information is not currently available on professional occupations.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

Fifteen of 17 service providers responded to an invitation to participate in a telephone interview at the conclusion of the project. The focus of the discussion was on implementation. Do Essential Skills applications add enough value that organizations would consider using them in the future? Which client groups would benefit most? What are the barriers to implementation?

Overall, response to Essential Skills is highly favourable. Service providers genuinely appreciate the opportunity to be part of the study, to receive training on Essential Skills and to be able to offer the test at no cost to their organization. They see this as an opportunity to ‘catch the wave’ and believe that building capacity in the area of Essential Skills is a smart investment.

Most organizations are keen to use TOWES in the future and several organizations have already taken steps to include it in their budget. The range of testing services varies between organizations; some offer no testing at all and others offer a full battery of assessments. In general, organizations that offer testing are more likely to use TOWES and other Essential Skills tools.

Service providers say that TOWES is particularly valuable as a career exploration activity. They indicate that TOWES is unique and that they do not have anything comparable to offer clients. The fact that it is Canadian and it links test scores to the Canadian labour market through occupational profiles is highly appealing. They are using the resources that have already been developed such as the HRSDC website with occupational profiles and the Measure-Up website.

Many organizations were surprised by the test scores. For some, it raised questions about test validity. For others, it gave them new insight into the clients’ skill set. One manager commented that, “TOWES opened up the conversation and provided case managers with information to move the experience to a new level with clients.” Staff found that some clients have expertise in areas not validated by academic credentials and that others have scores lower than expected, which helped them pinpoint new strategies for success.

When asked which clients would benefit most from TOWES, service providers consistently point to people with the lowest test scores and/or those who are interested in career exploration, such as:

- Clients employed in one job for a long time and then laid off. They are uncertain about the transferability of their skills and often need to expand their thinking about career options.
- Clients with cyclical unemployment. Essential Skills and TOWES can help them identify why they are unable to transfer skills to new environments and where they could focus their efforts to close skill gaps.
- Clients struggling to market themselves to employers because they have low academic credentials and/or limited work experience. They perceive Essential Skills applications such as TOWES as a credential and recognized it as an opportunity to independently evaluate their skills.
- Clients who want to pursue training. Essential Skills and TOWES can help clients focus on the areas where they need improvement. It can also help build a case for Skills Development funding, although some local HRSDC representatives who review applications for funding are not familiar with the Essential Skills scores.
- “Non-professional” clients open to different career options and who want to evaluate their skills.
- “Professional” clients with strong academic credentials but who want to explore career options. However, professional clients with clear goals found limited value in TOWES because they were not interested in exploring different careers and because Essential Skills information about higher level occupations is currently not available.

Although clients with the lowest scores are the most likely to benefit from TOWES and Essential Skills, it appears that people within this group may have been reluctant to participate in this study out of fear of doing poorly. Therefore, it is important that TOWES be marketed to these groups in a non-threatening manner with emphasizes the benefits of Essential Skills approaches.

Marketing to clients is one part of the equation but organizations are acutely aware that marketing TOWES and Essential Skills to employers is the missing link. Once Essential Skills are understood and adopted by local industry, it will have value to clients. Several organizations in Ontario expressed grave concern that TOWES could be used irresponsibly by employers to screen out potential employees. They felt this was particularly true of small to medium sized businesses without human resource departments.

Three organizations said they were not interested in using TOWES in the future. Two are employment resource centers in the Vancouver area, where staff find face-to-face interviews with clients to be the most effective tool for initial needs assessment. They generally refer clients out for testing and career planning. Their relationship with clients is not long-term so group testing and bringing people back for follow-up after testing is a challenge. They find TOWES to be a good ‘reality check’ for many people regarding their skills but that it is more appropriate for Job Finding Clubs or other settings where career exploration take place and there is time to build a relationship with clients. Both organizations raised the issue of where to refer clients for upgrading if they scored low. The other two employment resources centers in the Vancouver area have a different service model, spend more time with clients and are more likely to be engaged in career planning activities. Their experience with TOWES was positive and they would consider using it in the future.

Although the third organization did not rule out using TOWES, staff felt issues with the test outweighed the benefits. Their concerns focused primarily on three areas: test validity (e.g., test didn’t accurately reflect clients’ abilities and experience; small print and industry-specific terminology was seen as a barrier), incomplete data about professional occupations, and potential misuse as a screening tool by employers. This organization is familiar with testing and provides full-service employment counseling in the London area. However, the information available to them about TOWES may have been incomplete, which addresses issues around test validity and why scores were not available for professional occupations; they participated in a half-day of training rather than two days.

In general, few communities have upgrading opportunities that specifically address Essential Skills deficits. Service providers are accessing local literacy organizations, school boards, post-secondary institutions and private service providers for general upgrading and skill development. They are also encouraging self-directed study using resources such as the Measure Up website. In the future, service providers would like to have targeted upgrading opportunities for clients in the area of Essential Skills. They would also like an inventory of local resources and ideas appropriate for Essential Skills upgrading.

Service providers consistently emphasized a belief that staff training is crucial to the successful implementation of Essential Skills applications and tools within their organizations. They suggest that all delivery staff attend training and that it offer a pragmatic, hands-on approach to the topic of Essential Skills (e.g., walk staff through the process as if they are working with a client). They generally feel the training they received through the project was very good and would like more emphasis on how to use test scores to assist clients, particularly those who score low. They also want more information on test validity and what the scores actually mean.

The cost associated with testing is a barrier for some organizations, particularly those that do not currently offer a range of assessments and therefore do not have a budget for this type of activity. Service providers generally do not feel it is appropriate to pass the cost along to the clients, as it could contribute to financial hardship at a time when clients are unemployed. They are hopeful that government will cover all or part of the cost of testing, should it be proven to help clients.

NOTABLE FINDINGS

- Most service providers feel there is a role for Essential Skills and TOWES in the delivery of EBSM. They say TOWES is particularly valuable as a career exploration activity and that it is unique; it provides new insight into client skills.
- Clients who benefit most from TOWES are those with low test scores and those who are interested in career exploration. Clients previously employed in higher skilled occupations find the test of limited value because Essential Skills data is not currently available on 'professional' occupations and because they are typically less interested in career exploration.
- Service providers want more information about how to use test scores to assist clients, particularly people with low scores. The issue is compounded by the lack of Essential Skills upgrading opportunities in most communities.
- There is a perceived need for staff training relating to Essential Skills applications and tools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The impact of Essential Skills on individuals, families, firms, communities, and societies is well documented. Scott Murray, former Director General with Statistics Canada, reports³ that a one percent rise in average literacy among Canadians will precipitate a 1.5 percent permanent increase in GDP per capita and a 2.5 percent increase in labour productivity. In a study⁴ conducted by the Canadian Trucking Human Resource Sector Council, Essential Skills proficiency was shown to significantly impact safety performance. CPPI-Certified Petroleum Professional Drivers at reading text skill level 1 were 2.76 times more likely to have had a safety-related incident than those at skill levels 3 to 5. Drivers who scored at level 3 in numeracy were 2.61 times more likely to have had a safety-related incident than those at skill levels 4 and 5.

The international report entitled *Learning a Living – First Results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey*⁵ presents other important findings. It states that employment-seeking adults with level 1 and 2 document use skills remain unemployed an average of 27 weeks longer than adults with skills at levels 3, 4, and 5. This is a particularly poignant example given the low document use skills of the EBSM participants who took part in this project.

While research has documented the benefits of Essential Skills approaches, efforts to establish systems and resources to support EBSM have been piecemeal, with varying levels of commitment by local colleges and governments. Rolling out Essential Skills to EBSM will require a new level of coordination. Just ‘making it available’ to service providers is not sufficient.

It is therefore recommended that:

Recommendation 1: Do further research.

Dr. Theresa Kline, a psychometric expert from the University of Calgary has verified that the interpretation of the data in this report is correct. However, caution should be exercised when extrapolating it to other regions of Canada and other populations. For example, this study features results from four regions in Canada but it is not known if these results are consistent in other areas such as the Maritimes, Quebec or Canada’s

³ T. Scott Murray (June 2005), presentation to WWestNet’s Measuring Success Conference: *International Comparisons and Bottom Lines*, slide 15.

⁴ CTHRC (2004), *Essential Skills as a Predictor of Safety Performance among CPPI-Certified Petroleum Professional Drivers in Alberta*, page 24.

⁵ OECD and Statistics Canada (2005), *Learning a Living: First Results of the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey*, Ottawa and Paris.

north. It would be useful to know if document use skills are poor in other EBSM populations across Canada, as these findings could shape future national policy decisions.

Data on target populations should be enhanced. This study indicates that immigrants may have Essential Skills deficits that are greater than the average EBSM participant but these results should be validated with a wider population. Only two of 17 service providers worked primarily with immigrants in this study. Also, designated group populations such as youth, Aboriginal and Persons with Disabilities were not large enough to draw reasonable conclusions. It would be interesting to know if these groups share the same document use skills deficit as was noted in the larger EBSM population.

When the Essential Skills profiles are completed for high skill occupations, there is an opportunity to compare EBSM client proficiencies with labour market requirements. The present Essential Skills data includes only front-line occupations.

Recommendation 2: Coordinate the integration of selective Essential Skills assessment in EBSM.

Rolling out Essential Skills tools for use by other EBSM service providers requires a plan with dedicated resources. By establishing a coordinating entity such as a national centre of excellence, all Essential Skills information, training and tools for service providers could be consistent in quality. A cross-jurisdictional needs assessment could determine shared challenges and result in the development of resources that could be used across the country. Delivery could still take place through local service channels such as colleges but there would be a new level of communication among all Essential Skills partners. This is a smaller version of the model found in the Forum of Labour Market Ministers' Labour Market Information Working Group where a Secretariat coordinates cross-jurisdictional communication between federal/provincial/territorial governments. Representatives meet to create a plan and they undertake select activities of shared benefit.

Recommendation 3: Create an inventory of resources and ideas currently available for Essential Skills upgrading.

Although the purpose of this study is not to assess Essential Skills upgrading opportunities, the general lack of local resources is a consistent theme voiced by service providers. The strength of TOWES lies in its ability to pinpoint skill deficits (e.g., increase document use skills from a level 1 to a level 3) but there are few learning resources that allow people to close the gap in an equally focused manner. Service providers are very unclear about what is available and whether 'traditional' venues such as

general academic upgrading and literacy tutoring are the best options for clients with Essential Skills gaps, particularly those who do not want to invest extended time in school.

A logical first step to bridging the skills gap is to determine what resources are currently available. This includes resources specific to Essential Skills (e.g., Measure Up website), those that can be tailored to Essential Skills (e.g., specific modules in traditional curriculum) and even some informal approaches to self-study (e.g., read magazines to increase skills in reading text). By publishing an inventory of resources and ideas for Essential Skills upgrading, service providers can immediately begin to assist clients to close the skills gap. Although Canada-wide in perspective, the inventory could be enhanced by an addendum of regional resources. Ideas for upgrading and a list of resources should be presented in an applied format that service providers find fast and easy to use in client counseling.

Recommendation 4: Work with provincial and territorial jurisdictions to create additional learning resources for Essential Skills upgrading, particularly in the area of document use.

After identifying resources currently available, the next step to closing the skills gap is the development of additional learning resources where needed. This study points to a particular need for skill development in the area document use. As participants have reading and numeracy proficiency levels similar to Canada's general population, these two skill areas do not appear to be contributing factors to their unemployment. However, their document use skills are significantly lower than the Canadian average in every region tested, suggesting that this skills deficit may be preventing them from finding and keeping a job.

EBSM clients, like other adults, likely develop their reading and numeracy skills through formal instruction such as secondary or post-secondary education, and from informal learning that takes place in work, social, and community social settings. However, it appears that study participants are not acquiring adequate document use skills through these same channels; their scores are lower than the average population. This suggests the need for specific programs and resources geared towards helping unemployed workers strengthen their document use skills.

It is therefore recommended that HRSDC work with provincial and territories to support the development of additional learning resources for Essential Skills upgrading, particularly in the area of document use.

Recommendation 5: Market Essential Skills to employers.

Although many service providers can see the value of Essential Skills, they feel that the missing link is its use by local employers. Once employers integrate Essential Skills into their human resource practices, it will become widely accepted by clients. Some large employers are beginning to use Essential Skills but a critical mass has not yet formed to create the momentum required. EBSM service providers also raised the issue of ethics and fear that small and medium sized business without the benefit of a human resource department are more likely to use Essential Skills tools as a screening tool to the detriment of their clients. A coordinated marketing campaign with professional training and tools for employers is recommended, with special attention given to the appropriate use of Essential Skills approaches.

APPENDIX I

SUPPLEMENTARY DATA

Figure 7.1: highest level of schooling mother completed

Highest Level of Education Mother Completed	All	EI/Reachback	2001 Census* Canadian Pop. aged 24 to 65
Less than high school	31%	31%	23%
High school	32%	35%	24%
More than high school	34%	31%	53%
Undeclared	3%	3%	N/A
Total	100%	100%	100%

*Source: Statistics Canada website:

<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/products/highlight/Education/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo=PR&View=1b&Code=0&Table=2a&StartRec=1&Sort=2&B1=Distribution&B2=Both>. August 2, 2005

Figure 7.2: Detailed Essential Skills performance for all clients

Score	Percentage of Participants (total)		
	Reading text	Document Use	Numeracy
1	4.1%	14.9%	4.1%
1 (2)	2.5%	8.9%	3.4%
2	16.7%	23.2%	16.3%
2 (3)	9.9%	20.4%	11.0%
3	23.4%	18.1%	22.5%
3 (4)	17.0%	10.1%	17.7%
4	17.0%	4.4%	11.5%
4 (5)	9.4%	0%	13.5%
5	0%	0%	0%

Figure 7.3: Scores for EAS clients.

Score	Number of Clients in EAS Interventions		
	Reading text	Document Use	Numeracy
1	13	50	11
1 (2)	8	32	11
2	55	76	54
2 (3)	35	60	30
3	77	57	79
3 (4)	48	30	55
4	49	12	36
4 (5)	32	0	41
5	0	0	0
Average	2.84	2.09	2.84

Figure 7.4: Scores for Skill Development clients.

Score	Number of Clients in Skills Development		
	Reading text	Document Use	Numeracy
1	3	7	3
1 (2)	1	2	0
2	8	8	5
2 (3)	3	12	6
3	8	6	7
3 (4)	7	3	11
4	8	2	5
4 (5)	2	0	3
5	0	0	0
Average	2.78	2.10	2.78

Figure 7.5: Scores for Targeted Wage Subsidy clients.

Score	Number of Clients in Targeted Wage Subsidies		
	Reading text	Document Use	Numeracy
1	0	0	0
1 (2)	0	0	0
2	0	0	1
2 (3)	0	0	1
3	2	3	1
3 (4)	0	1	0
4	1	0	0
4 (5)	1	0	1
5	0	0	0
Average	2.50	3.00	2.75

Figure 7.5: Scores for Self-employment clients.

Score	Number of Clients in Self-employment		
	Reading text	Document Use	Numeracy
1	1	1	0
1 (2)	0	0	0
2	0	1	1
2 (3)	0	1	2
3	2	1	1
3 (4)	3	3	1
4	3	3	2
4 (5)	1	0	3
5	0	0	0
Average	3.20	2.90	3.20

Figure 7.6: Scores for Job Creation Partnerships clients.

Score	Number of Clients in Job Creation Partnerships		
	Reading text	Document Use	Numeracy
1	0	2	1
1 (2)	1	0	1
2	1	7	2
2 (3)	1	4	2
3	5	3	3
3 (4)	7	3	3
4	4	1	4
4 (5)	1	0	4
5	0	0	0
Average	3.10	2.30	3.00

Figure X: Length of time looking for work versus perceptions about whether TOWES was helpful.

TOWES helpful to plan career or find job?	All participants	Length of time looking for work (online survey)				
		Less than a month	1 to 3 months	4 to 6 months	7 to 12 months	More than a year
		Yes	32%	24%	35%	32%
Somewhat	32%	24%	32%	37%	27%	24%
No	16%	24%	9%	14%	20%	22%
Not sure yet	18%	28%	20%	17%	20%	13%
Undeclared	2%	0%	4%	0%	5%	0%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 7.8: Client age versus perceptions about whether TOWES was helpful.

TOWES helpful to plan career or find job?	All participants	Age		
		16 to 24	25 to 45	46 to 65
Yes	32%	32%	30%	32%
Somewhat	32%	24%	38%	25%
No	16%	12%	16%	19%
Not sure yet	18%	32%	13%	22%
Undeclared	2%	0%	3%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Figure 7.9: Immigrant status versus perceptions about whether TOWES was helpful.

TOWES helpful to plan career or find job?	All participants	Immigrants (online survey)
	Yes	32%
Somewhat	32%	29%
No	16%	14%
Not sure yet	18%	23%
Undeclared	2%	1%
Total	100%	100%

Figure 7.10: Length of time discussion results versus perceptions about whether TOWES was helpful.

TOWES helpful to plan career or find job?	All participants	Length of time spent discussing TOWES results (online survey)		
		Less than 10 minutes	10 to 20 minutes	More than 20 minutes
		Yes	32%	34%
Somewhat	32%	33%	31%	31%
No	16%	15%	25%	17%
Not sure yet	18%	18%	18%	24%
Undeclared	2%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

APPENDIX II

DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

(in alphabetical order)

Figure 1.1: Project participation

Region	Community	Service Provider	Number of Participating Clients
London, On	Woodstock	Community Employment Services	16
	St. Thomas	Employment Services Elgin	17
	Exeter	Exeter Adult Learning Centre*	12
	Woodstock	Fanshawe Job Finding Club*	6
	London	Goodwill Career Centre*	19
	Strathroy	Government Access Information Network	16
	London	London Unemployment Help Centre*	10
	London	WIL Employment Connections	62
Subtotal			160
Kingston, On	Kingston	Kingston Employment and Youth Services	31
	Subtotal		
Vancouver, BC	Vancouver	Family Services of Greater Vancouver - Vancouver East ERC	37
	Coquitlam	RDK Career Services	35
	Vancouver	SUCCESS	32
	Vancouver	YWCA of Greater Vancouver - ERC	32
	Subtotal		
Kootenays, BC	Nelson	Kootenay Career Development Society	37
	Trail	The Greater Trail Community Skills Centre	26
	Cranbrook	Cranbrook Boys and Girls Club – Job Links	16
	Cranbrook	Job Seekers	29
	Subtotal		
Total			436

Community Employment Services Community Employment Services in Woodstock, Ontario brings together federal, provincial and municipal employment services. Services include the WorkStart Program, career and employment counseling, vocational testing, financial support for job training, and wage subsidy programs.

The Centre for Employment & Learning in Exeter, Ontario is operated by the Avon Maitland District School Board. It offers a wide variety of services and resources to the community and a co-coordinated service delivery model for Labour Market adjustment in Huron County. The learning centre activities are located in the South Huron District High School. We provide credit courses towards an Ontario Secondary School Diploma, upgrading in reading, writing and math skills, GED preparation, computer training, ESL and online courses related to employment. In partnership with Fanshawe College they now provide a supported on line learning certificate program in Office Administration and a variety of online courses.

Employment Services Elgin is an umbrella organization offering assistance to companies seeking staff as well as individuals seeking a change in employment. It is a cooperative arrangement between Human Resources Development Canada, Fanshawe College, as well as several other similar minded community organizations. In addition to filling the traditional roles of an HRDC office, Employment Services Elgin offers a much broader range of services. Employment Services Elgin will assist new companies with many of the administrative tasks associated with industry start-up and staffing. Free services available include pre-screening of potential employees, recruiting services, aptitude testing, and labor market information. In addition, Employment Services Elgin acts as a conduit to training assistance programs for employers. Also, Employment Services Elgin can offer new companies an extensive knowledge of the local labor market and access to a national database of qualified candidates.

Family Services of Greater Vancouver has two employment centers – the Vancouver East Employment Resource Centre and the Vancouver Downtown Employment Centre. They offer a free service available to all residents of the Greater Vancouver area who are unemployed or under-employed (working less than 20 hours a week) and legally entitled to work in Canada. They provide an information, counseling, and referral service for employment and career options, education and training opportunities, community resources, and job search tools. At the Vancouver East Employment Resource Centre, 13 staff provide employment counseling, referrals, case management and expert help with Skills Development Employment Benefit applications. Clients can access the drop-in resource room, updated job postings, computer stations, free resume assistance and photocopying, local faxing and phone calls for job search.

The Fanshawe College Job Finding Club in Woodstock, Ontario provides the facilities, equipment and techniques required for highly motivated, skilled job seekers to conduct an intensive job search. It is a joint effort of Fanshawe College and HRSDC. The Job Finding Club offers a free three week job search program where participants both 'work and learn' within a supportive, interactive group environment where club members share ideas, inspiration and job leads. Trained facilitators and clerical staff offer expertise, guidance and support. Operating for more than 10 years in Oxford County, an average 80% of clients find employment within the first three months.

Goodwill's Career Centre offers a wide variety of programs and services to jobseekers, other service providers, and employers at one or more of their three London locations. They offer a range of assessments, employment counseling and action planning, along with a verity of supports to assist clients.

The Government Access Information Network (GAIN) Centre is located in Strathroy, Ontario and is a cooperative effort of employment and training service partners. It coordinates, refers and delivers a wide range of information on government

services. Clients can receive individual assistance with job search and career development, attend employment preparation workshops, get information and referrals on training opportunities and access the Job Bank and Internet.

The Greater Trail Community Skills Centre, in collaboration with Selkirk College, offers a wide variety of training solutions for the corporate and private sectors. It was created in response to a recognized need to strengthen opportunities for skill enhancement to address rising unemployment, economic restructuring and changing demographics in the community. It offers a range of employment services including career assessment, action plan development, case management and the negotiation of federal training supports. It is also contracted by Selkirk College to administer and deliver its Continuing Education and contract training services in the local area.

Job Links Youth Employment Support Centre in Cranbrook, B.C. has innovative employment services for youth ages 15 to 30. They strive to provide an environment that is creative, accessible and professional. Their services are free of charge and they offer full service resources for employment, entrepreneurial and career planning needs.

Job Seekers Resource Centre in Cranbrook, BC is a non-profit organization funded by HRSDC and coordinated by the [College of the Rockies](#). Job Seekers services are available to anyone who is looking for work or wants to reach employment success. Whether they are employed and considering other careers, or unemployed and looking for work, their qualified employment counselors can help.

Kingston Employment and Youth Services (KEYS) is a community-based, employment counselling centre offering integrated programs and services. The vision of KEYS is a community in which individuals can foster their work potential and make positive life choices. Since its inception in 1983, KEYS has worked with approximately 32,000 people. Their core employment and career services include intake, assessment, individual and group counselling, workshop facilitation, placement and referral. They currently have 45 staff involved in varied employment and labour adjustment services.

Kootenay Career Development Society in Nelson, British Columbia offers employment needs assessment and career counseling, along with a variety of resources to assist clients seeking work such as resume assistance. Their geographic area covers the city of Nelson, the smaller communities of Kaslo, Salmo, and Crawford Bay. They provide services to a large geographic rural area where their client base is diverse as the employment opportunities. There are a significant number of small businesses in our area and a growing number of professionals who move to the area for the quality of life and can "live here and work anywhere" due to technology.

The London Unemployment Help Centre is a community, non-profit, charitable organization serving London and surrounding area since 1983. It offers a supportive, professional environment and provides employment assistance with effective job search techniques, career advice, and placement opportunities.

RDK is funded by HRSDC to provide employment services to clients in Coquitlam, Port Coquitlam and Port Moody, British Columbia. Their career consultants have worked with over 12,000 clients to develop back-to-work action plans and over 24,000 have utilized the up-to-date resources in their Employment Resource Centres. From their Austin and Glen locations in Coquitlam, 35 clients volunteered to participate in the Essential Skills Field Study. RDK assisted in pioneering case management in BC and has presented on effective case management practices at NATCON. The organization utilizes a variety of client-centered assessments and supports. RDK provides comprehensive employment services to the Tri-Cities community. For additional information, please refer to www.rdk.bc.ca

SUCCESS is a non-profit charitable organization and the largest social service agency serving the Chinese community in British Columbia. It has a staff of 350, more than 18,000 members and over 9,100 volunteers. Funded by the government, SUCCESS offers a comprehensive network of employment services and programs, which directly assist new Canadians of different occupations and career goals to achieve their success. Three of SUCCESS' 11 locations participated in the Essential Skills Field Study – Tri-Cities Campus, Pender Campus and Burnaby Campus.

WIL Employment Connections (WIL) is a non-profit organization dedicated primarily to facilitating the economic and social integration of immigrant women and men into the broader community of London and area. It provides services in assessment, employment counseling, employment preparation, information, referral and advocacy. In 20 years of operation, it has helped more than 10,000 people find and keep employment.

YWCA of Greater Vancouver – Employment Resource Centre is a drop-in centre funded by HRSDC for people who are unemployed or underemployed and legally entitled to work in Canada. It offers case management (which may include vocational counseling and employment search assistance), and an employment resource area with computers and a library.

APPENDIX III

DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined as follows:

EBSM: Employment Benefits and Support Measures. Employment Benefits include Targeted Wage Subsidies, Skills Development, Self-Employment and Job Creation Partnerships. Support Measures include Employment Assistance Services.

Reading text: Involves knowledge and skills needed to understand and use information from texts including editorials, news stories, brochures, and instruction manuals.

Document use: Involves the knowledge and skills required to locate and use information contained in various formats, including job applications, payroll forms, transportation schedules, maps, tables, and charts.

Numeracy: Involves the knowledge and skills required to effectively manage the mathematical demands of diverse situations.

Service provider: An organization that delivers EBSM on behalf of HRSDC.

Employment counsellor: A career development professional who provides services to clients. Depending on the organization, this position may vary by title (e.g., case manager).

EI/Reachback: An Employment Insurance claimant and/or a reachback client. A reachback client is someone who has either had an EI claim in the past three years or a maternity/parental claim in the past five years.

APPENDIX IV

OCCUPATIONAL DEMAND LISTS PROVIDED BY HRSDC

Kingston, 2003 - Entry and Mid-Level

NOC	Occupational Title
0632	Accommodation Service Managers
1221	Administrative Officers
7321	Automotive Service Technicians, Truck Mechanics and Mechanical Repairers
6452	Bartenders
7271	Carpenters
6611	Cashiers
4212	Community and Social Service Workers
6242	Cooks
1453	Customer Service, Information and Related Clerks
3411	Dental Assistants
3222	Dental Hygienists and Dental Therapists
4214	Early Childhood Educators and Assistants
6482	Estheticians, Electrologists and Related Occupations
6453	Food and Beverage Servers
6641	Food Counter Attendants, Kitchen Helpers and Related
1411	General Office Clerks
6271	Hairstylists and Barbers
6663	Janitors, Caretakers and Building Superintendents
3233	Licensed Practical Nurses
6661	Light Duty Cleaners
3413	Nurse's Aides, Orderlies and Patient Service Associates
0631	Restaurant and Food Service Managers
6421	Retail Salespersons and Sales Clerks
0621	Retail Trade Managers
7411	Truck Drivers

London Census Metropolitan Area, 2003

NOC	Occupational Title
7321	Automotive Service Technicians, Truck Mechanics and Mechanical Repairers
6474	Babysitters, Nannies and Parents' Helpers
1231	Bookkeepers
6611	Cashiers
4131	College and Other Vocational Instructors
1453	Customer Service, Information and Related Clerks
7414	Delivery and Courier Service Drivers
1111	Financial Auditors and Accountants
3112	General Practitioners and Family Physicians
6622	Grocery Clerks and Store Shelf Stockers
6663	Janitors, Caretakers and Building Superintendents
4112	Lawyers and Quebec Notaries
6661	Light Duty Cleaners
0911	Manufacturing Managers
7452	Material Handlers
9486	Mechanical Assemblers and Inspectors
4154	Ministers of Religion
6623	Other Elemental Sales Occupations
1114	Other Financial Officers
1224	Property Administrators
6232	Real Estate Agents and Salespersons
3152	Registered Nurses
0712	Residential Home Builders and Renovators
0631	Restaurant and Food Service Managers
6421	Retail Salespersons and Sales Clerks
0621	Retail Trade Managers
0611	Sales, Marketing and Advertising Managers
6651	Security Guards and Related Occupations
0013	Senior Managers, Financial, Communications and Other Business Services
7413	Taxi and Limousine Drivers and Chauffeurs
7232	Tool and Die Makers
7411	Truck Drivers
4121	University Professors
6471	Visiting Homemakers, Housekeepers and Related Occupations

Vancouver Lower Mainland

NOC	Occupational Title
632	Accommodation Service Managers
1441	Administrative Clerks
1221	Administrative Officers
1231	Bookkeepers
7271	Carpenters
2281	Computer and Network Operators and Web Technicians
711	Construction Managers
6242	Cooks
1453	Customer Service, Information and Related Clerks
7414	Delivery and Couriers Service Drivers
3411	Dental Assistants
2253	Drafting Technologists and Technicians
4214	Early Childhood Educators and Assistants
2241	Electrical and Electronics Engineering Technologists and Technicians
7241	Electricians (Except Industrial and Power System)
111	Financial Manager
6453	Food and Beverage Servers
6212	Food Service Supervisors
1411	General Office Clerks
5241	Graphic Designers and Illustrators
121	Insurance, Real Estate and Brokerage Managers
7451	Longshore Workers
7452	Material Handlers
1243	Medical Secretaries
3413	Nurse Aides, Orderlies and Patient Service Associates
7294	Painters and Decorators
7284	Plasterers, Drywall Installers and Finishers and Lathers
7251	Plumbers
6432	Pursers and Flight Attendants
3152	Registered Nurses
6421	Retail Salespersons and Sales Clerks
621	Retail Trade Managers
6211	Retail Trade Supervisors
6411	Sales Representatives - Wholesale Trade (Non-Technical)
7411	Truck Drivers
6471	Visiting Homemakers, Housekeepers and Related Occupations

Nelson Area (Kootenays)

NOC	Occupational Title
0632	Accommodation Service Managers
1221	Administrative Officers
7321	Automotive Service Technicians, Truck Mechanics and Mechanical Repairers
6474	Babysitters, Nannies and Parents' Helpers
1231	Bookkeepers
7271	Carpenters
6611	Cashiers
8421	Chain-saw and Skidder Operators
7311	Construction Millwrights and Industrial Mechanics (Except Textile)
7611	Construction Trades Helpers and Labourers
6242	Cooks
4214	Early Childhood Educators and Assistants
6472	Elementary and Secondary School Teacher Assistants
4142	Elementary School and Kindergarten Teachers
8251	Farmers and Farm Managers
6453	Food and Beverage Servers
6641	Food Counter Attendants, Kitchen Helpers and Related Occupations
2223	Forestry Technologists and Technicians
1411	General Office Clerks
6622	Grocery Clerks and Store Shelf Stockers
7421	Heavy Equipment Operators (Except Crane)
7312	Heavy-Duty Equipment Mechanics
9614	Labourers in Wood, Pulp and Paper Processing
8612	Landscaping and Grounds Maintenance Labourers
6661	Light Duty Cleaners
8616	Logging and Forestry Labourers
7452	Material Handlers
3413	Nurse Aides, Orderlies and Patient Service Associates
1414	Receptionists and Switchboard Operators
3152	Registered Nurses
0631	Restaurant and Food Service Managers
6421	Retail Salespersons and Sales Clerks
0621	Retail Trade Managers
4141	Secondary School Teachers
1241	Secretaries (Except Legal and Medical)
7411	Truck Drivers
6471	Visiting Homemakers, Housekeepers and Related Occupations

APPENDIX V

SAMPLE TOWES INDIVIDUAL RESULTS REPORT



CANADA'S ESSENTIAL CREDENTIAL RESULTS REPORT

Date: 14/03/2005

Test: G2 – G Series

Name: Joe Client

ESSENTIAL
SKILLS
LEVELS
ACHIEVED

READING TEXT	DOCUMENT USE	NUMERACY
1 (2)	1	2 (3)

Congratulations, you successfully completed TOWES, a tool that uses real-life examples to measure the three Essential Skills needed to be safe and productive at work. They are called Essential Skills because they are essential or necessary for learning. The stronger your Essential Skills are, the better able you are to learn technical skills and apply your knowledge in new situations.

TOWES measures how well you can do simple to complex tasks in these three areas – reading text, document use and numeracy. This version of TOWES gives you a score on a scale of 1 to 3 (1 is low complexity and 3 is higher complexity). If your score has two numbers with one in brackets like this **1 (2)**, you scored level 1 but your score was on the high end of the 1's so you may also be able to do level 2 tasks.

How complexity works, using reading text as an example.

- People who score 1 in reading text can read short text to find a single piece of information. For example, pet groomers find a product by reading supply catalogues and flyers.
- People who score 2 can read simple text to find more than one piece of information. For example, bartenders read bartenders' guides to find recipes for mixed drinks.
- People who score 3 in reading text can find and use written information from several sources. They can also identify what is relevant and what is not. For example, painters refer to procedure manuals to find out how to work with special surfaces.

Jobs have scores, too. Hundreds of occupations have been profiled to find out what Essential Skills workers need to do the job and how complex the tasks are. Each occupation has a series of scores – three of the scores are reading text, document use and numeracy. All jobs have a range of simple to complex tasks but the occupation gets a number according to how complex the typical tasks are.

For example, administrative clerks and bartenders both do level 1 reading tasks (e.g., they read short notices at work) but administrative clerks also do reading tasks at level 3 (e.g., they may read policy manuals). The administrative clerk's job has a higher reading text score than the bartender. Many bartenders likely have the skills to read at level 3 but their jobs do not require it.

This is useful information! Find out more about jobs you are interested in by looking at the Essential Skills Job Profiles (see Online Resources). Compare your scores to the scores of hundreds of jobs. Use your TOWES score to determine whether you need more training to further develop your Essential Skills. Practice your Essential Skills by doing exercises on the TOWES Measure Up website.

	Reading Text	Document Use	Numeracy
Air Transport Ramp Attendant	2	2	2
Administrative Clerk	3	3	3
Bartender	1	1	3
Correctional Services Officer	3	3	3
Early Childhood Educator Asst.	2	2	1
Flight Attendant	3	3	2
Furniture Refinisher	2	2	3
Special Events Coordinator	3	3	3
Trades Helper	3	3	2

Online Resources

www15.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca

Packed with real-life examples, the Essential Skills Job Profiles tell you what workers do and how complex their tasks are.

measureup.towes.com

(do not add www before the website address). Practice your Essential Skills and explore careers at the TOWES Measure Up website.





Date: 14/03/2005
 Test: G2 – G Series
 Name: Joe Client

ESSENTIAL SKILLS LEVELS ACHIEVED	READING TEXT	DOCUMENT USE	NUMERACY
	1 (2)	1	2 (3)

Demand Occupations in Your Local Area

Based on information provided by your local Human Resources and Skills Development Canada office, the occupations listed below are most likely to need workers in your local area. Each occupation listed may contain several similar jobs. For example, customer service, information and related clerks work in a variety of industries and may have different job titles.

Compare your TOWES scores to the occupations listed below to see which ones interest you and which ones are a good match with your Essential Skills. If your scores are lower than the occupational requirements, you might have difficulty performing some of the higher complexity tasks. Consider how you might further develop your Essential Skills to achieve your career goal.

For more information about the skills each job requires, go online at www15.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca. Some occupations may not have been analyzed yet for Essential Skills requirements but you will find more than 200 Essential Skill occupational profiles that represent at least 500 different jobs.

Demand occupations in your area – Kingston, ON				
Occupation	NOC	Reading Text	Document Use	Numeracy
Autobody Painters	7322	Data not available	Data not available	Data not available
Automotive Mechanical Installers and Servicers	7443	3	3	2
By-Law Enforcement and Other Regulatory Officers	6463	3	3	3
Customer Service, Information and Related Clerks	1453	2	3	3
Estheticians, Electrologists and Related Occupations	6482	3	2	2

Canadian Occupations

This is a list of all occupations in Canada that match your Essential Skills scores. If your skills match or are greater than the occupation's score, you likely have the Essential Skills to perform this job. Each job will also require technical skills but this tells you whether you have the ability to learn technical skills at this level. For more information about the skills each job requires, go online at www15.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca.

Canadian occupations with a likely Essential Skills Match				
Occupation	NOC	Reading Text	Document Use	Numeracy
Babysitters, Nannies and Parents' Helpers	6474	2	1	2
Bartenders	6452	1	1	3
Material Handlers	7452	2	1	2
Textile Inspectors, Graders and Samplers	7452	2	1	2

APPENDIX VI

LETTER FROM PSYCHOMETRICIAN



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Telephone: (403) 220-5561
www.psych.ucalgary.ca
Fax: (403) 282-8249

August 16, 2005

Mr. Conrad Murphy
TOWES Department
Bow Valley College
332 6th Avenue, S.E.
Calgary, Alberta T2G 4S6

RE: EBSM Essential Skills Field Study (August 2005)

Dear Conrad:

This letter is to indicate that I have read the report, "EBSM Essential Skills Field Study" and find that the interpretation of the data is appropriate. It is important that the readers of this report note that the limitations of the study as cited by the authors are correct and should be heeded.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Theresa J.B. Kline, Ph.D.
Consultant to Bow Valley College on TOWES-Related Psychometric Issues