

#### **Foreign Credential Recognition Project - Improving the Earning Potential of Foreign Credentialed Immigrant Professionals**

In 2007 HRSDC announced a partnership with TOWES & BVC to develop and test an online tool that will aid foreign credentialed immigrants in assessing and improving their Essential Skills. By improving their skills in Reading Text, Document Use and Numeracy, new Canadians will increase their employability and earning potential.

#### **Project Objective**

To develop an Online curriculum that will help immigrant learners assess and improve their Essential Skills. Using authentic workplace materials, the online tool teaches strategies for effectively finding and using information in the context of the Canadian workplace.

#### ***The Need for an Essential Skills Training Tool***

The face of Canada's labour market is evolving - Immigrants are rapidly becoming a key source of labour for employers. Federal research predicts that all new labour market growth will be from immigration by 2011<sup>1</sup>.

Immigrants are arriving in Canada with the required education & training for their occupation, but have low levels of Essential Skills placing them at risk for successful employment.

Research has examined the gap between earnings of immigrants compared with Canadian workers<sup>2</sup>. Some key findings:

- Immigrants are more likely to have skills lower than their educational attainment would suggest.
- 60% of immigrants have skills at levels 1 & 2.
- 6 in 10 immigrants have inadequate Essential Skills for the Canadian workplace.
- Canadian employers overwhelmingly reward employees on the basis of skills and not qualifications. As a result, immigrants earn lower wages.
- Most immigrants would see an increase in earnings of about 20% if they improved their Essential Skills.

***Immigrant professionals already have the technical skills needed for work; by improving their Essential Skill levels in reading text, document use & numeracy, they will be better prepared for safe and productive work in Canada.***

***Higher Essential Skills scores are expected to translate into more effective work performance & result in higher rewards from employers in the form of increased remuneration – benefiting the Canadian economy, workforce & also new Canadians.***

#### **Links for more Information:**

HRSDC-Bow Valley College Media Release - <http://news.gc.ca/web/view/en/index.jsp?articleid=282289&>

Foreign Credential Recognition - <http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/ws/programs/fcr/overview.shtml>

Essential Skills - [http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/home\\_e.shtml](http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/home_e.shtml)

International Adult Literacy Survey-The Effects of Literacy on Immigrant Earnings

- <http://www.statcan.ca/english/research/89-552-MIE/89-552-MIE2004012.pdf>

<sup>1</sup>Historical data from Statistics Canada; projection from Applied Research Branch, HRSDC.

<sup>2</sup>"The Effect of Literacy on Immigrant Earnings" Statistics Canada.

#### Project Pilot

- Begins January 2008
- Each participant will take a pre-TOWES test prior to starting curriculum.
  - Results will be used to determine the students learning plan & areas of focus for the curriculum.
  - Results will also be used as a benchmark to measure skill gains, as a post-TOWES test will be written following the curriculum.
- Participants can start at anytime. The pilot will end June 30, 2008 – all post testing and feedback must be completed by then.
- Participants will pilot the first 2 Chapters (material involving Levels 1, 2 & low level 3 skills).
- Participants will use a developmental version of the curriculum (contains placeholder audio & images).
- Feedback from project partners & participants will be used to make enhancements to the tool.

#### Content

- On-line tool uses authentic Canadian workplace documents from a variety of occupations to teach new Canadians coping strategies to effectively navigate and use documents to complete workplace tasks.
- The curriculum is organized into 3 chapters. Chapter 1 targets skill levels 1 & 2, Chapter 2 targets skill levels 2 & 3, and Chapter 3 targets skill levels 3 and above.
- Each chapter is organized in modules which cover specific learning strategies for reading text, document use, and numeracy.
- Learning strategies build upon each other throughout the modules and chapters; learners will be presented with a lesson, and will practice what they have learned using authentic Canadian workplace documents.



#### Design Features

- The content is designed around the needs of immigrant learners, for example:
  - Language is simple and clear
  - Concepts are repetitive and easy to learn
  - Interface is uncluttered and neutral
  - Navigation is simple and accessible
  - Focus is on the concepts not animations
- Students are given a paper based workbook which includes copies of the workplace documents.
- Facilitator's are provided with a ESO Guide containing answer steps to the Chapter Assessments, strategies for building upon the curriculum, and general information on TOWES and Essential Skills.
- TOWES scores, occupational information and the participant's individual learning goals are used to create a custom learning plan.
- Facilitators can monitor the progress of students using built in reporting and tracking functions.

#### PROJECT PARTNERS:

- \*John Abbott College\*Douglas College\*Bow ValleyCollege\*Durham College\*
- \*Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers\* Conestoga College\*Seneca College\*
- \*Sheridan Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning\*