Steps to developing company specific Essential Skills or ESL training

You want to start implementing Essential Skills training, but you're not sure what to do or what to expect. This section outlines the steps to set your business up for success.

To set your business up for successful training you will need to:

1. Learn about Essential Skills.

2. Help managers, supervisors and others involved understand what Essential Skills are and the benefits.

3. Contact an Essential Skills advisor.

4. Form an Essential Skills team.

5. Conduct a workplace need analysis to determine needs and priorities.

6. Determine activities to support building Essential Skills into your workplace.

7. Develop customized Essentials Skills and/or ESL training.

8. Evaluate to plan next steps.

9. Deliver training.

10. Monitor Programs and Conduct Ongoing Evaluation.

Good ES and/or ESL (ES) training is tailored to each workplace based on careful planning. It is not a generic training program or a pre-packaged curriculum. How ES training unfolds depends on the nature of each workplace, employer goals, and interests of employees. So it is best not to skip any of these steps.

Recommended steps for Essential Skills and/or ESL (ES) training in your workplace

1. **Learn about Essential Skills.**

2. **Help managers, supervisors and others involved understand what Essential Skills are and the benefits.**

It is critical for you and others to understand what Essential Skills are, and the benefits before taking other steps forward. The roadmap provides resources and guidance. If you have already completed Steps 1 and 2 in the roadmap please continue to the next steps for developing ES training.

3. **Contact an Essential Skills advisor.**

   Just like other workplace training, undertaking Essential Skills training requires fact finding and steps to ensure it meets your business needs. It takes expertise and experience to do these tasks properly. We recommend getting the support of an Essential Skills advisor.

Many provinces have workplace Essential Skills advisors and there may be funding available as well.

There are a number of things you will want to clarify when you speak to an Essential Skills advisor about Essential Skills training.

You and the Essential Skills advisor will have different roles and responsibilities and it is important to discuss these as you begin working together.

See the Roadmap: Work with local resources. It provides:

- A list of resources in your area
- Characteristics of an Essential Skills advisor
- Questions to ask an Essential Skills advisor about services and training

4. Form an Essential Skills team

Create an Essential Skills team. It should involve all key stakeholders and people who can contribute different ideas and functions. We have found that a project team is a key success factor in planning ES initiatives. This is especially true for ES training.

The team may be small and informal or larger and more formal depending on the size and nature of the workplace. The role of the team is to guide the initiative—plan the best way to conduct a WNA, offer programs and make sure that everything is on track. Members of the team are, in effect, the ambassadors for the initiative.

Why form a team?

- to get the voice of everyone in the company
- to create buy-in at all levels in the company
- to give direct communication to all employees

Who is on the team?

A cross-section of employees should be on the team. The following is a short list of potential stakeholders, depending on your company's size:

- owner or employer
- ES advisor
- human resources or training manager
- other managers or supervisors
- professional drivers
- dispatchers

- other employees, such as new Canadians

What is the role of the team?

The team members' main role is to champion the ES initiative, including training.

Specifically, they help guide the analysis by providing:

- perspectives on the goals and the steps in the needs analysis;
- recommendations for creating a plan, based on the analysis data;
- answers to questions that co-workers may have about the analysis, ES initiative and activities;
- input about outcomes and next steps.

Your ES advisor will help you form your ES team and conduct team meetings.

5. **Conduct a workplace need analysis to determine needs and priorities.**

   A workplace needs analysis (WNA) has been provided to help you identify priority areas for action and possible ES training activities. See Roadmap: Step 3 Engage Employees.

   The purpose of a WNA is to:
   - identify specific Essential Skills gaps and needs of your organization

   - identify priority areas for action

   - identify a range of activities

   - create support and buy-in from employees – this is critical for success

   Why do a WNA?
   - It will help guide your decisions. When you consult a cross-section of employees, you get a fuller, more accurate picture of needs and concerns.

   - You will learn how effective various activities might be for identified needs.

   - Results from a needs analysis provide a good business case to commit enough money and time to respond to identified needs.

   The ES team with the support of your ES advisor can help you plan the WNA. In some workplaces, everyone will be invited to participate, and in others the WNA may focus on one department or area of a business. This will depend of the size of the organization, your resources and the initial triggers that brought you to the table.

6. **Determine activities to support building Essential Skills into your workplace.**

   The WNA will help determine priorities for action. These will generally be training program ideas and other activities that will have the biggest impact. These can include:
   - Developing company-specific ES and/or ESL training
   - Revising and creating documents
   - Creating job aids
   - Building Essential Skills into existing training
   - Referring employees to skills training
   - Creating a culture of learning

   The Roadmap: Step 4 Take Action provides guidance for undertaking the ideas for action.

   Once priorities are decided, it is important to develop a plan. A plan will include your goals and objectives, a budget, a timeline of activities, program logistics and how you will go about getting instructors.

   The ES advisor and team can help to communicate and promote programs and activities offered and get people involved.

7. **Develop customized Essentials Skills and/or ESL training.**

   Developing customized training programs means starting with findings from the WNA. Your ES advisor can support you in developing customized training programs and to hire an instructor. They will gather authentic materials and situations from your workplace as part of program development. You may choose to integrate Essential Skills with existing training programs to make them more effective, relevant, and accessible to employees and/or to develop customized ES and/or ESL training.

   Remember, your ES training will be most successful when done in conjunction with other ES activities. The Roadmap: Step 4 Take Action provides additional ideas for action.

8. **Evaluate to plan next steps.**

   It's important to monitor progress towards goals and make sure your program and activities are on track. Developing an evaluation plan at the beginning of your Essential Skills initiative can help.

   Evaluation guidelines have been provided for you. See The Roadmap: Step 5 Evaluate Success and Adjust

   The information from the evaluation will show how well your expectations have been met and what, if anything, needs to come next. Information from your evaluation can show all partners the value of their investment.

9. **Deliver Programs**

    Once your program development phase is complete and your evaluation strategy is in place it is time to implement your training. This means ensuring that you have program logistics and policies worked out, and instructors in place.

10. **Monitor Programs and Conduct Ongoing Evaluation**

    Once your program(s) begin, implement your evaluation plan. This should include regular meetings to make sure that your programs are on track and a strategy to capture the outcomes once programs are complete.