



Quality Framework
for
Adult Literacy and Essential Skills
Service Delivery

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Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour
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1. Background

In December 2009, the Department of Post-Secondary Education Training and Labour (PETL) published *Working Together for Adult Literacy: An Adult Literacy Strategy for New Brunswick*. This document outlines a number of strategic priorities in the field of adult literacy and essential skills service delivery, one of which is to “ensure quality and effectiveness of adult literacy programs”.

The Quality Initiative was launched by the Community Adult Learning Services (CALs) branch of PETL in December 2009, to explore and define what constitutes quality as it relates to adult literacy and essential skills programs and services in New Brunswick. The purpose of the initiative was to develop a framework that would guide the department and its partners in their efforts to understand, measure and improve the quality of programs and services in the province.

The framework is intended to apply to all adult literacy and essential skills service delivery undertaken by, on behalf of, or funded by CALs, including but not limited to the following programs:

- Community Adult Learning Network (CALNet) community-based programs
- CALs Workplace Essential Skills (WES) Program
- Laubach Literacy New Brunswick (LLNB) one-to-one tutoring services
- La Fédération d’alphabétisation du Nouveau-Brunswick (FANB) Family Literacy programs.

2. Quality Vision

- Service delivery is focused on meeting the needs of adult learners
- Adult literacy and essential skills programs and services in New Brunswick are of consistently high quality
- Everyone involved in service delivery is committed to quality standards
- A collaborative culture of continuous improvement exists across and within all organizations in this sector

3. Quality Initiative Process

The Quality Initiative followed a structured process which included the following elements:

- formation of an internal advisory group
- research relating to the work of other jurisdictions in the area of quality standards, general and specific to adult literacy and essential skills, and
- broad-based consultation with internal and external stakeholders.

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The consultation process included government staff, non-profit adult literacy organizations, community-based adult literacy service delivery providers, teachers/trainers and learners. 149 learners from all over the province participated in focus groups and provided their input on what is important to them in a quality adult literacy/essential skills program.

The Department sincerely appreciates the collaboration and input of all the stakeholders involved.

4. Overview of the Quality Framework

The Quality Framework encourages partnership and collaboration between stakeholders to develop and implement a quality assurance model that will lead to continuous improvement in service delivery, and that meet the needs of all stakeholders, especially the learners.

The Quality Framework comprises 4 interconnected elements (see diagram):

- **Quality standards** - statements outlining the key elements of a quality program and the core of the quality framework. Can also be described as elements of good practice.
- **Operational support** for quality – includes a range of ways that the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour supports the day to day continuous improvement efforts of service delivery organizations.
- **Internal assessment** – internal assessment is the process by which a service delivery organization gains evidence of its own effectiveness in providing quality services and uses the learning from that process to improve its organization and services.
- **External evaluation** – this constitutes a periodic review of an adult literacy and essential skills program, undertaken by the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (or designated agents), to evaluate performance against the quality standards statements and pre-determined performance indicators (normally outcome-related measures).

Quality Framework Diagram 1.0



5. Elements of the Quality Framework

5.1 Quality Standards

Function of Quality Standards

Quality standards are at the core of the Quality Framework. They outline the key elements of a quality adult literacy and essential skills system. The quality standards inform each of the following:

- good practice
- service delivery planning
- service delivery
- internal and external evaluation
- future development of service delivery at the provincial level.

Quality Standards Overview

The quality standards have been developed in support of *Working Together for Adult Literacy: An Adult Literacy Strategy for New Brunswick* and are designed to cover the elements of program and service delivery that are seen to ultimately influence the quality of the learner experience and achievement of stakeholder (including learner) outcomes. These are management, planning, resources, environment, human resources, delivery, partnerships and continuous improvement.

The eight quality standards for adult literacy and essential skills service delivery in New Brunswick are as follows:

- QS1. *The service delivery organization is managed responsibly and meets all regulatory requirements*
- QS2. *Planning processes are in place which lead to a documented strategy and action plan outlining how the organization plans to meet the literacy and essential skills needs of their stakeholders*
- QS3. *The service delivery organization identifies, deploys and manages effectively the resources required to support its adult literacy and essential skills action plan*
- QS4. *Adult literacy and essential skills services promote mutual respect, equality and diversity and are sensitive to the social, cultural, vocational and learning context/s of learners*
- QS5. *Human resources are qualified and/or experienced in line with provincial guidelines, are supported appropriately by the organization, and have access to regular opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills*
- QS6. *Program development and delivery is focused on enabling learners to meet their literacy and essential skills goals and reflects best practice in adult learning principles*

QS7. Adult literacy and essential skills service delivery organizations work in partnership with other stakeholders to ensure learner needs are met

QS8. The service delivery organization conducts its business in an open and transparent manner and is committed to the continuous improvement of its practices, programs and services

Each of the quality standards has a number of dimensions and these are explained in the following section.

Quality Standards (QS)

QS1: The service delivery organization is managed responsibly and meets all regulatory requirements

The service delivery organization has a well articulated governance model which defines roles and responsibilities internally and between partner organizations and outlines provisions for leadership, guidance and oversight relating to organizational direction and policies.

The organization has documented policies, procedures and guidelines to ensure that all legal and fiscal responsibilities are met, from policy to execution.

The organization has administrative practices which ensure that the needs of all stakeholders are met and best practices in document management are adopted to ensure currency and relevance of all organizational documentation.

The individual privacy of learners and staff is respected and protected.

QS2: Planning processes are in place which lead to a documented strategy and action plan outlining how the service delivery organization plans to meet the literacy and essential skills needs of its stakeholders

The service delivery organization has a multi-year strategic plan for literacy and essential skills informed by recent, reliable data on need, input from stakeholders, an environmental scan, and best practices in program planning, design and delivery. This is reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

The organization has a shorter term action plan that is derived from the strategic plan and outlines how programs and services will be delivered, establishes time-bound goals/targets and details how the plan will be monitored and evaluated.

The strategy and action plan reflect the values and goals of the organization and are based on quality standards and current research and development in the adult learning, literacy and essential skills fields.

QS3: *The service delivery organization identifies, deploys and manages effectively the resources required to support its adult literacy and essential skills action plan*

Resources may be financial, human (management, administration and delivery), premises, equipment, learning materials and any others required to implement the service delivery action plan.

The service delivery organization deploys resources to safely and effectively implement the action plan, to meet the needs of stakeholders and to ensure conformance to regulatory requirements.

The organization manages finances responsibly to meet the needs of the organization as defined in the action plan and in accordance with provincial guidelines and contractual agreements.

Appropriate learning environments are established in safe, comfortable premises, which take into account different learner needs and the learners' right to confidentiality.

Learning resources are current, accurate, in good condition and adequate for the number of learners.

QS4: *Adult literacy and essential skills services promote mutual respect, equality and diversity and are sensitive to the social, cultural, vocational and learning context/s of learners*

Programs and services welcome all adult learners, and are committed to providing equal opportunities for learners and staff (paid and volunteer). They are designed and delivered to respond to the unique and diverse needs of adult learners. They are affordable, convenient and flexible to ensure that adult literacy and essential skills learning opportunities are as accessible as possible, to as many as possible. Under-represented and hard to reach groups are given due consideration in the planning and delivery of adult literacy programs.

The program values and reflects respect for individual differences. Policies and procedures encourage mutual respect, understanding and openness and are implemented in a fair and consistent manner. Learning approaches validate the social and cultural background, goals, learning style and level of each learner.

QS5: *Human resources are appropriately qualified and/or experienced for their role, are supported appropriately by the service delivery organization, and have access to regular opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills*

All human resources, paid or voluntary, are recruited and selected according to defined provincial guidelines on suitability, qualifications and experience, where they exist, and to internal specifications relating to their roles, otherwise. A well-defined orientation program is available to all new personnel.

Human resources are encouraged to work as a team and to share responsibility for service delivery. The roles and responsibilities of all human resources are defined and widely communicated throughout the organization and to partners.

Appropriate support systems are in place within the organization for human resources including:

- human resource policies and procedures
- communication protocols
- performance reviews, and
- appropriate reward/recognition structures.

Human resources are encouraged and supported in further developing their skills and knowledge and gaining additional qualifications, relating to their role. Regular opportunities for networking and peer support are provided.

Adult literacy and essential skills practitioners have access to teaching/learning support in the form of comprehensive learning resources and tools that inform the structure, content, approach and activities that may be included in the learning plans of learners at different levels.

QS6: *Program development and delivery is focused on enabling learners to meet their literacy and essential skills goals and reflects best practice in adult learning principles*

Service delivery is focused on meeting learner needs, and is facilitated by staff that has the knowledge, skills and experience to teach and/or support improvement in adult literacy and essential skills. Appropriate levels of group and individual support are provided.

Program development and delivery is informed by research and best practices in the field of adult learning, adult literacy and essential skills. Adult learners' current knowledge and experience is recognized, valued and utilized within their learning program. A range of teaching styles is adopted to cater to different learning styles and to allow learners to work at their own pace. Teaching and learning materials are contextually relevant to the learner and learner goals. Learning is structured in a meaningful way with plenty of opportunity for practice.

Orientation processes are welcoming and reassuring and include a thorough introduction to program provisions. Initial assessment is sensitive to learner confidentiality and results in a detailed understanding of the learner's goals, starting point in relation to literacy and essential skills development, strategies to be adopted to help them improve their skills and an individualized, mutually agreed learning plan.

Learner progress is reviewed on a regular basis, detailed feedback is provided to the learner, and learning accomplishments are documented and celebrated. Information from the progress review is utilized to inform the ongoing development of learning plans. Programs lead to recognized learning outcomes that are meaningful to the learner.

Support system/s are in place for learners that help to provide a more holistic response to their needs and to maximize their ability to participate and succeed in the program. Information regarding learning pathways and transitional supports is readily accessible.

QS7: *Service delivery organizations work in partnership with other stakeholders to ensure learner needs are met*

Service delivery organizations work in partnership to adopt an integrated approach to meeting learner needs, such that service delivery is well-coordinated and seamless. Different measures of success are recognized and respected. Where a potential conflict of interest exists between stakeholders, this is recognized, discussed and resolved with the learner's interest in mind.

Communication between stakeholders is professional, and is sensitive to learner confidentiality. Processes are defined to ensure appropriate levels of stakeholder involvement at different stages in the learning lifecycle.

QS8: *The service delivery organization conducts its business in an open and transparent manner and is committed to the continuous improvement of its practices, programs and services*

The service delivery organization operates in accordance with provincial guidelines, and general information about the program is available to the public. Policies for all key aspects of the program are developed with board or management approval.

The organization demonstrates a commitment to being accountable for the quality and effectiveness of its programs and services. Appropriate measures and record-keeping/reporting processes are in place to ensure ongoing diligence in monitoring progress and success.

The service delivery organization seeks feedback from stakeholders, undertakes internal evaluation, collaborates in external evaluation, and shares and utilizes the results to develop the organization and its services. Systems are in place to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of improvement actions. The organization demonstrates a collective commitment to a continuous improvement culture.

5.2 Operational Support

Operational support for quality is provided by the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour on an ongoing basis and may take many different forms:

- Regional consultation and coordination – mentoring, coaching, point of reference for guidance and advice, link to community and government resources
- Partnerships and partner input
- Professional development – coordination of some professional development opportunities, provision of trainers, recommended resources and financial support for adult education certification
- Standardized policies, procedures and guidelines
- Curriculum and resource development
- Information technology systems and expertise
- Promotion and recruitment resources – coordinated campaigns, templates, tools
- Networking opportunities, shared good practice
- Formative and summative evaluation

5.3 Internal Assessment

Effective internal assessment will engage a wide range of people within the organization at all stages of the process, to ensure a broad view across the organization, including the initial planning phase. The governing body and management are involved to drive change within the organization. Teaching staff, support staff, learners, employers and communities are involved too. Involving a wide range of people across the organization not only helps to understand and address issues but also enhances commitment to continuous improvement and fosters a sense of ownership. In this way, internal assessment becomes an integrated and ongoing function that becomes part of “business as usual”.

Internal assessment focuses on knowing what you do and how you want to do it, learning from what you do, and using what you learn to develop your organization and its services. It requires a number of phases:

- Planning
- Gathering information, through a variety of methods
- Analysis and interpretation
- Reporting and action
- Celebrating accomplishments
- Monitoring improvements.

Internal assessment should be undertaken annually, but does not necessarily have to be undertaken all at once. The assessment may be broken down into elements e.g. each quality standard, or area of responsibility, or different program units, at the discretion of the organization, and different elements may be undertaken at different times.

An organization’s capacity for internal assessment will depend on a number of factors such as organizational maturity, staffing levels, evaluative experience etc. and is not expected to be highly-evolved at the outset. The Department is committed to providing initial and ongoing support to service delivery organizations to help build that capacity.

5.4 External Evaluation

The phases of external review and evaluation are similar to those of self-assessment but will be undertaken by representatives of the Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (or designated external agents) in collaboration with the service delivery organization, every five years. Internal assessment documentation may be utilized within the external evaluation to provide additional insights.

External evaluation provides the opportunity for an external, more objective review of the quality and value of the work undertaken by a service delivery provider and acknowledgement of the achievements of learners, volunteers, staff, management and governing bodies.

The evaluation process involves the participation of various stakeholder groups. It not only provides an opportunity for affirmation and recognition of good practice and successes but also results in the identification of areas for improvement and actions to address these. Recommendations arising from the evaluation process are discussed and agreed and implementation timelines for future actions are developed. It is anticipated that most actions are implemented in the short term but some may be carried forward into program planning processes.

5.5 Quality Indicators

Quality Area	Quality Standard	Quality Indicators
1. Management	<i>The service delivery organization is managed responsibly and meets all regulatory requirements</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented governance model for the organization and explanation of how it advances the mission and values of the organization • Definition of roles and responsibilities within the organization and between partners • Evidence of meeting all regulatory requirements including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ adequate insurance coverage ○ health and safety measures ○ first aid procedures, and ○ the protection of personal information in accordance with the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act • Evidence of effective administration and document management • Communication/management reports
2. Planning	<i>Planning processes are in place which lead to a documented strategy and action plan outlining how the organization plans to meet the literacy and essential skills needs of its stakeholders</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented strategy that focuses specifically on literacy and essential skills • Regular review of the strategy, and evidence of taking into account changing circumstances/factors (internal and external) • An action plan, which; : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ details programs and services to be offered ○ sets realistic but challenging targets/goals (incl. need served, retention, progress and outcomes) ○ outlines timeframes for achieving those goals ○ explains how progress will be tracked and reported ○ is updated on a regular basis • Assigned responsibility for keeping abreast of new research and development in adult learning and literacy and essential skills

Quality Area	Quality Standard	Quality Indicators
3. Resources	<i>The service delivery organization identifies, deploys and manages effectively the resources required to support its adult literacy and essential skills action plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of resources required to execute the action plan, and how those resource requirements will be met • Effective resource management policies and procedures, that cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ human resources; ○ finances ○ appropriate learning environments ○ learning resources (print, audio visual, computer-based, other), condition, availability ○ equipment and technology support ○ administrative support and time ○ partnerships that inform or enhance service delivery • Detailed financial records; external, annual review of accounts
4. Social inclusion and respect for diversity	<i>Adult literacy and essential skills services promote mutual respect, equality and diversity and are sensitive to the social, cultural, vocational and learning context/s of learners</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of service delivery options that maximize access and meet diverse needs e.g. level, geography, time of day, attendance requirements, group/individual etc. • Recruitment plan, policies and procedures that recognize the range of adult learner contexts • Policies and procedures that promote mutual respect, understanding and openness to all individuals and groups who access services including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a safe, positive and appropriate learning environment ○ learner confidentiality ○ information on relevant support services e.g. funding, childcare, transportation, access to computers etc. ○ contextually relevant learning materials

Quality Area	Quality Standard	Quality Indicators
5. Human Resources	<i>Human resources are appropriately qualified and/or experienced for their role, are supported appropriately by the organization, and have access to regular opportunities to enhance their knowledge and skills</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Well-defined policies , procedures and/or plans for and evaluation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ human resource recruitment and selection ○ orientation processes and tools ○ standard personnel practices including grievance procedures ○ performance appraisals and prompt feedback ○ feedback from staff at all levels ○ code of conduct ○ reward and recognition staff (paid and unpaid) • Training and development activities including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ human resource development plans ○ orientation program/s ○ in-service training program/s and other professional development provisions ○ and specifically, processes to monitor the effectiveness of tutoring/teaching/instruction and for helping tutors/teachers/instructors improve practice • Support systems such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tools to support processes and procedures e.g. comprehensive guidelines, job specifications for all involved ○ Defined communication processes for day to day, change management, consultations etc. ○ Reference materials, suggested curriculum, example learner activities, learning resources ○ Regular meetings, peer support groups, networking opportunities

Quality Area	Quality Standard	Quality Indicators
6. Delivery	<p><i>Program development and delivery is focused on enabling learners to meet their literacy and essential skills goals and reflects best practice in adult learning principles</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intake assessment processes and tools • Trained and/or qualified staff to agreed standards • An appropriate practitioner/learner ratio • Evidence of practice that supports learners in achieving their goals and demonstrates best practice in adult learning principles, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ skills profiles, where appropriate ○ learner assessments ○ individual, mutually agreed learning plans ○ lesson plans, where appropriate ○ a range of teaching styles that allow learners to work at their own pace ○ adequate, current, contextually relevant teaching/learning resources ○ opportunities to practice acquired skills ○ regular review of learner progress that informs the learning plan ○ documented learning accomplishments ○ recognized learning outcomes • Information for learners regarding progression routes and transition/bridging support services available • Minimal waiting lists • Continuity of service
7. Partnerships	<p><i>Service delivery organizations work in partnership with other stakeholders to ensure learner needs are met</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defined communication protocols between stakeholders • Processes and procedures to ensure appropriate levels of stakeholder involvement • Documented discussion/resolution of conflicts of interest between stakeholders • Record-keeping and reporting on different measures of success that are meaningful to key stakeholder • Organizational needs assessment • Multi-stakeholder Initiative/program reports

Quality Area	Quality Standard	Quality Indicators
8. Transparency and Continuous Improvement	<i>The service delivery organization conducts its business in an open and transparent manner and is committed to the continuous improvement of its practices, programs and/or services</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of program information available to general public • Documented policy approval process/es • Evidence of regular review and revision, where appropriate, of the organization's strategy and action plan • Processes to ensure accurate recording and reporting of learner data including progress information; effective reporting to inform continuous improvement • Documentation relating to internal assessment • Examples of stakeholder feedback on practitioners, programs and services, to inform continuous improvement • Evidence of regular review and revision, where appropriate, of suggested curricula, learning material and resources.

6. Next Steps

In addition to the distribution of this document to all stakeholders, the Community Adult Learning Services (CALS) branch will provide the following:

- a series of presentations to stakeholders to review the quality framework in detail and answer any questions
- training for internal and external staff who will be taking a lead in the introduction and implementation of the quality framework.

Additionally, CALS will work with service delivery organization partners to develop a phased implementation plan which will outline the areas of activity and steps to be taken to introduce, integrate and execute the quality assurance framework.

Finally, in recognition of the fact that this document needs to be a “living” document to remain current and relevant, CALS will establish a process of review and revision based on stakeholder feedback and implementation experience.