

Workforce

Literacy skills dictate success in the workplace.

Employees with higher literacy skills earn higher incomes. Higher literacy skills lead to decreased unemployment, greater opportunities for job mobility, greater access to full-time work, and increased opportunities for further training. Employees with higher literacy skills also report higher self-esteem and fewer occupational injuries.

The current labour market demands stronger literacy skills than in the past. Entry-level positions now often require digital literacy skills.

Literacy skills are essential in all job-related training. Lack of basic literacy is a barrier to employment and the job training necessary to gain employment or promotion.

Everyone benefits in a society that ensures that all Canadians can prepare for, obtain, and keep decent paying, quality employment. Canada is one of the few industrialized countries without a coordinated national system of adult basic education. The involvement of a full range of partners at the national, provincial, regional, local, and organizational levels is necessary in developing a strategy that values the country's human assets. Partners could include, but are not limited to, government, business, labour, education, community groups, and learners.

What can be done?

All stakeholders must be integrated into the development of workplace literacy and essential skills programs.

Workers, management, unions, community agencies, literacy organizations, and governments can be involved in developing and delivering a variety of programs that meet the needs of employees with low literacy skills. These may include:

- workplace preparation
- welfare-to-work initiatives
- onsite tutoring
- special jobsites where workers can 'earn and learn'.

The key to developing successful programs is maintaining a respectful process that integrates all interest groups in order to meet the needs of all involved. Workplace literacy programs produce greater employee self-confidence, improved literacy skills, increased participation in other training, better problem solving skills, better team building skills, increased ability to use technology, increased health and safety, less absenteeism and improved labour-management relations.