

The CONNECT SCALES Project: An Executive Summary

CONNECT Strategic Alliances, representing Ontario's 24 publicly funded colleges, has been funded by HRSDC-OLES for a three-year initiative seeking to improve employability by providing tools to identify the Literacy and Essential Skills of un- or underemployed Canadians, in an effort to obtain employment or to increase their prospects.

The *Supporting the Canadian Advancement of Literacy and Essential Skills (SCALES)* project will develop a series of tools/best practices that will integrate a series of Literacy and Essential Skills (LES) approaches into existing active employment measures, retraining options and active job searches; increase the capacity of service providers and employment counsellors in relation to LES in order to assess their skill levels to develop action plans for re-entry into the workforce or re-training options. The project will improve employability by providing models to identify the LES of adults to obtain jobs and/or to increase their employment prospects.

During year one, the project team, located in British Columbia, Nova Scotia and Ontario, will work closely with the Advisory Committee members, to research what tools have already been developed, what is being developed, and what it is that service providers and employment counsellors feel is lacking in order to achieve the aim of embedding LES into job search and employment interventions. Research methods will include working closely with representatives from the Provincial Governments, interview and receive input from LES experts and various organizations, review recent reports from various writers such as the College Sector Committee. The Project Team will also interview and receive feedback from their local employment centres to determine what the regional needs are in each province.

By the end of October 2010, we will have completed our Environmental Scan and determined what the common themes are in each of the three provinces. By the end of February 2011, we will have identified pilot sites, developed an evaluation strategy for the pilots, and developed the tools and components that Employment Counsellors have identified as necessary for integrating a LES approach into their work with their clients.

During year two, the models will be tested for effectiveness, replicability and sustainability with various service providers in British Columbia, Ontario and Nova Scotia each being evaluated to ensure adequate feedback is provided from the sites. Based on the evaluation analysis from the pilot sites, any necessary changes will be incorporated into the tools and the final versions produced.

The final year of the SCALES project will be devoted to the national dissemination of the tools to service providers, including career practitioners, employment counsellors, colleges, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, LES working groups, and other interested groups. This will be achieved through a CONNECT-hosted website, awareness-raising sessions, stakeholder email updates and alerts, and participation in partner-hosted conferences and events that address labour market issues.

By the end of the SCALES project, CONNECT Strategic Alliances will have developed LES tools that will enhance the current employment programs in each province and will ultimately assist Canada's workforce to be skilled and trained to meet the new job demands of the 21st century.

Project Partners: