Towards an Integrated Model to Support the Literacy Development of Francophones in Canada
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Acknowledgements
The writings and reflections in this document are mostly drawn from analyses conducted by staff at the Centre d’apprentissage et de perfectionnement (CAP) in Hawkesbury, Ontario, and from their own thoughts and experience. As a forerunner and an innovator, the CAP has been pursuing a “vision with regard to the design and development of training programs for adults with low literacy skills that is based, in part, on the integration of various public services through strategic partnerships” since the 1990s. The contributions of both the CAP and its director Diane Dugas in constructing a vision and a practice in this matter have helped to fuel—20 years later—the reflections of the FCAF and its partners, and to bring about, of course, the publication of this document.

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ISBN 978-0-9813831-7-0
Towards an Integrated Model to Support the Literacy Development of Francophones in Canada continues the approach adopted by the Fédération canadienne pour l’alphabétisation en français (FCAF) within the context of its strategic planning process. For some years now, the FCAF has been trying to take a fresh look at the situation of Francophone adults with low literacy skills and the educational resources available to them.

In 2007, the FCAF published *C’est le temps d’agir: Plan de rattrapage pour l’alphabétisation des adultes francophones vivant en milieu minoritaire* (It’s Time for Action, a Literacy Catch-Up Plan for Adult Francophones in Minority Settings). This document provided an overview of the surprising results from the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS): Overall, 42% of working-age adult Canadians (16 to 65 years) have difficulty coping with the demands of a knowledge economy and society like our own, meaning that they have trouble understanding what they read (Statistics Canada, 2003). An analysis of the IALSS data also shows that 56% of the people reporting French as their mother tongue have trouble understanding what they read, compared to 39% of the people whose mother tongue is English (Statistics Canada, 2003). The FCAF reacted immediately and proposed, in the same document, a plan built on six axes of intervention that would guide all of its actions and activities. These six axes, which would be reorganized over the years, are as follows: 1) Strengthening of ties in order to establish strategic partnerships; 2) Programs and services; 3) Professional development and resourcing; 4) Communication, advocacy and awareness; 5) Assessment, research and reflective practices; and 6) Organizational capacities.

During its annual general meeting in 2009, the FCAF clarified and had its members approve four separate but interrelated strategic directions that took their inspiration from the organization’s new perspective:

- **Enhanced essential skills:** This strategic direction proposes that essential skills become the basis of training services offered in communities. Essential skills are those skills needed to work, learn and live. The following nine essential skills are widely accepted: reading texts, numeracy, writing, document use, oral communication, working with others, continuous learning, thinking skills, and computer use. However, according to the FCAF and its members, “three skills specific to Francophone communities” should be added to the list, because they are essential for enhancing the vitality of communities and families in a minority setting. Hence the addition of the word “enhanced” in the name of this strategic direction. These supplementary skills are as follows:
  - Transmission of French language and culture;
  - Developing and maintaining awareness of the written word;
  - Participating in the development of one’s community.
A continuum of services: The strategic plan must work towards creating a continuum of services for learners. Service offered must be proactive, constant, and meet the specific needs of a diverse clientele. Training can be provided in either a formal or informal context, and be accredited or not.

A social blueprint to improve the essential skills of Francophones across Canada: Over the next 10 years, in order to reach 125,000 Francophones and improve their literacy level, a social blueprint that targets the entire community must be established. This social blueprint should be adapted to the characteristics of the milieu on national, regional or provincial, and local levels. The FCAF and its members will lead this project, but its success will be dependent on multiple partnerships with various stakeholders in French-speaking communities.

Partnerships and coalitions: Achievement of the strategic plan needs to be based on a group of local partnerships and regional and provincial coalitions. Collaborative arrangements may take various forms and include diverse stakeholders. Regional and local specificities will be respected.

In 2010, a new governance model stemming from the national consultation led by the FCAF was adopted. The governance model, which is more inclusive and representative of various socio-economic environments and present-day realities in relation to education, adult training and economic development, paves the way for approaches better adapted to the needs of Francophone adults with low literacy skills. These approaches are based on a global vision of literacy development in Francophone communities rather than on the delivery of literacy services as such. The key element of the new governance model is therefore its ability to unite, in an integrated governance structure, various geographic intervention areas (provincial, territorial, Canada-wide), various stakeholders, and various sectors interested in literacy among Francophones.

In 2011, with the publication of this document, the FCAF is now completing a cycle of strategic reflection and transition. The FCAF is taking a clear stance in favour of an integrated approach to adult training and a strategic framework, because, as Serge Wagner says,

Francophones would benefit from opening up to a broader and more comprehensive vision--both systemic and dynamic--of literacy. Literacy does include learning, but it also includes the use of writing, behaviours associated with it, and associated cultural practices. Literacy appears to be a key concept; it addresses the basic skills that are indispensable for acquiring any subsequent knowledge and know-how. It is transmitted culturally, increases during the critical period of early childhood education, and develops throughout one’s lifetime, based on each individual’s ability to learn and to undertake continuing education (Wagner, 2002; free translation).

We invite you, therefore, to follow and learn about our path as an organization as you read this document.

Enjoy your reading!

Normand Lévesque
Executive Director of the RESDAC

In August 2011, the Fédération canadienne pour l’alphabétisation en français (FCAF) changed its name to « Réseau pour le développement de l’alphabétisme et des compétences (RESDAC) ». The French-language version of this document was published under the name of FCAF.
Towards an Integrated Model to Support the Literacy Development of Francophones in Canada

This document calls for both reflection and action. Although it is likely to provoke many passionate discussions, the objective of this document is “to offer those organizations in the field of training and education for adult Francophones in Canada a literacy development model.” And I do hope and believe that it will also be published in English, because it will surely be of interest to our colleagues and partners in the other linguistic communities of Canada.

I was both curious and apprehensive when I began to read the proposed model, because admittedly, the challenge is great and the obstacles are many.

I was apprehensive because one only need consider the size of our country, its diversity, and the very distinct personality of its various governments, institutions and agencies, to understand the complexity. And when we talk about personality, we also think about character, identity and differentiation.

My curiosity was piqued because I was initially involved in the creation of the Fédération canadienne pour l’alphabétisation en français (FCAF), when we had to obtain its letters patent and decide its organizational name. I always, therefore, look with admiration at the long road the organization has travelled over the years. That the organization was able to maintain its initial goals, enhance them, pass them on, and anchor them into a wide range of expertise developed within various communities, both inspires and encourages me.

After 23 years of activism in my little hometown, a relatively homogenous community, our agency still has to fight all too frequently to stake out its place among the various adult education institutions. What is more, the Centre’s work is often slowed by the bureaucratic requirements of public servants who find themselves just as overwhelmed as we are with their government apparatus.

Fortunately, during nearly 20 of these 23 years of work, I was lucky to be extremely well supported by the author of this document, Donald Lurette. If we had been alone in this adventure, we would not have achieved all that we did together. When one became discouraged or rebellious, the other became dynamic or composed. When one could not support a partner, the other stressed the importance of compromise with regard to the academic and professional advancement of our learners.

When the traditional or logical path did not work, we sometimes took a less-travelled road in order to overcome the obstacles before us. A lot of creativity, a great deal of discipline, a small amount of disobedience, an enormous amount of respect for our learners, and a sense of humour: these elements all characterized our evolution within this vast and complex field of adult education.
Donald has now become a consultant. He brings his multi-dimensional knowledge of the field and his expertise as a researcher to the FCAF, its members and its partners. In this document, he was able to leverage his experience at the Centre d’apprentissage et de perfectionnement (CAP) to effectively and stylishly develop an andragogical approach that is truly up to the challenges we are all facing when it comes to offering services and programs that are adapted to adults with low literacy skills.

Analyses conducted by CAP staff over the past 20 years, and their reflections and experience, are the basic building blocks of the model being recommended today by the FCAF. What interests me most in this document, however, is the FCAF’s suggestion that we continue to reflect. The organization is advancing our efforts even further by proposing the model across Canada, and is looking more than ever to “take a fresh look at the situation of Francophone adults with low literacy skills and the educational resources available to them.”

I have the impression therefore that I have come full circle twice: After having witnessed the very modest beginnings of the FCAF, I am now watching it thrive and open up to new horizons; I am now also seeing the key elements of the CAP’s day-to-day operations intersect with the FCAF’s new vision. Thanks to its innovative experiments and its ease, through its writings, of recommending intervention models, the CAP has become a source of inspiration for the Canada-wide model of literacy development being proposed by the FCAF.

I cannot help but appreciate the fact twenty years’ worth of hard work can persist, spread its wings, and transcend both time and space.

Happily yours,

Diane Dugas
Executive Director
Centre d’apprentissage et de perfectionnement inc.
Hawkesbury, Ontario, Canada
# Table of Contents

8 Abbreviations and Acronyms
9 Definitions of Key Concepts or Expressions Used in the Text
12 Introduction

13 **Part 1 : Towards a New Model of Practice**
1.1 From literacy training to literacy development: Why this paradigm shift?
1.2 Possible courses of action

17 **Part 2 : The Literacy Development Model**
2.1 First component: Analyzing the environment
2.2 Second component: Creating strategic local partnerships
2.3 Third component: Constructing an andragogical intervention adapted to the needs of learners, the community and the partnering organizations
2.4 Fourth component: Feedback and reassessment of actions taken within the context of the model

32 **Part 3 : Reflective Practices by the CAP that Gave Rise to the FCAF’s Model**
3.1 Illustration of the first component: Analyzing the environment
3.2 Illustration of the second component: Creating strategic local partnerships
3.3 Illustration of the third component: Constructing an andragogical intervention adapted to the needs of learners, the community and the partners
3.4 Illustration of the fourth component: Feedback and reassessment of actions

54 **Part 4 : Advantages of an Integrated and Collaborative Model**
4.1 Advantages for learners with low literacy skills
4.2 Advantages for agencies offering adult literacy and basic training programs
4.3 Advantages for other partners

58 **Part 5 : Difficulties and Challenges of an Integrated and Collaborative Model**
5.1 Tensions within the partnership
5.2 Strains associated with the investments required during the implementation phase
5.3 Strains associated with andragogical choices

62 **Conclusion : Towards a Learning Community**

65 **Bibliography**
# Abbreviations and Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAP</td>
<td>Centre d’apprentissage et de perfectionnement (Hawkesbury, Ontario)</td>
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<td>CIRDEP</td>
<td>Centre interdisciplinaire de recherche/développement sur l’éducation permanente (CIRDEP-UQAM)</td>
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<tr>
<td>EOETC</td>
<td>Eastern Ontario Education and Training Centre (a partnership between three Prescott-Russell school boards to manage an adult high school)</td>
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<td>FCAF</td>
<td>Fédération canadienne pour l’alphabétisation en français</td>
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<td>FORA</td>
<td>Centre franco-ontarien de ressources en alphabétisation</td>
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<td>HRSDC</td>
<td>Human Resources and Skills Development Canada</td>
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<td>IALS</td>
<td>International Adult Literacy Survey - 1994</td>
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<td>IALSS</td>
<td>International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey -2003</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICÉA</td>
<td>Institut de coopération pour l’éducation des adultes</td>
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<td>LBS</td>
<td>Ontario’s Literacy and Basic Skills Program</td>
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<td>MTCU</td>
<td>Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (Ontario)</td>
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<td>ODSP</td>
<td>Ontario Disability Support Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
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<td>OSSD</td>
<td>Ontario Secondary School Diploma</td>
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<tr>
<td>OYAP</td>
<td>Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRBE</td>
<td>Prescott-Russell Board of Education (Ontario)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRCRCLSSB</td>
<td>Prescott and Russell County Roman Catholic French-Language Separate School Board</td>
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<td>PRSCA</td>
<td>Prescott-Russell Services to Children and Adults</td>
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<td>RCAT</td>
<td>Referral Centre for Adult Training (Hawkesbury, Ontario)</td>
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<td>RESDAC</td>
<td>Réseau pour le développement de l’alphabétisme et des compétences</td>
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<tr>
<td>TGV</td>
<td>Très Grande Vitesse (Fast Track programs, integrated training programs created by the CAP in Ontario)</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>U of G</td>
<td>University of Guelph in Ontario</td>
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<td>WSIB</td>
<td>Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (Ontario)</td>
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Academic strategies or abilities
Learning strategies or abilities allow learners to function better in programs where they are working towards a diploma or certificate in secondary or postsecondary institutions (summarize a text in writing, read and understand instructions, take written tests, write an essay, etc.).

Adult with low literacy skills
An adult who does not possess the basic cognitive skills (e.g. ability to read and write, and do mathematics) that would allow them to obtain information, particularly written information, and to organize it in order to find meaning (Legendre, 1993). This segment of the population is associated with adults who were classified at levels 1 and 2 of the IALS in 1994 and the IALSS in 2003.

Andragogical models or designs
An educational discipline in the teaching field that deals with the development of adult education specifications, meaning the design or the delivery of adult education strategies that are adapted to the specific conditions of each adult education situation and that are designed to produce the expected outcomes (Legendre, 1993).

Andragogy and an adult education intervention
Andragogy is the science studying all aspects of both the theory and practice of educating adults (Legendre, 1993). Andragogy addresses the entire adult education learning “system”: the interests of the targeted adult learner; the nature of the learning objects; learning styles (how educational content is transmitted and how new skills are acquired); the learning environment (community, types of support, etc.); and possible learning transfers. All of these elements must be taken into account in the design of an andragogical intervention.

Continuum of services
The continuum of services is based on recognizing the needs of a common client–needs that must be fulfilled by more than one institution or program, with each one having expertise that is complementary to the other. The acknowledged goal is to prevent duplication, inconsistencies or gaps in the services needed for the user and to ensure the quality of services being offered to the population. Accordingly, the continuum of services is based not only on the principles of mutual trust and mutual recognition of expertise, but also on formal collaboration mechanisms (Rehabilitation Centre Marie Enfant, UHC Sainte-Justine).

Employment or employability support programs or services
The goal of these programs or services is to provide employability services or employment assistance to adults undertaking a job integration process. The names of these programs or services may vary from one province to another.

Employability strategies or abilities
The goal of these strategies or abilities is to facilitate people's integration into the labour market (preparing a résumé, preparing for a job interview, creating a portfolio, etc.).

Essential Skills
For Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, essential skills are nine basic skills that allow adults to fully participate in the labour market and the community. They are indispensable for a wide range of tasks at work and in daily life, so they provide adult learners with a foundation for learning new skills (basic skills and technical or vocational skills). In this respect, essential skills increase peoples' ability to adapt to change. They have the distinctive feature of being used in “authentic” situations and have varying levels of complexity based on the nature of the task in real situations. The nine essential skills are as follows: reading, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, thinking, computer use, and continuous learning.

Generic skills (Soft skills)
These skills act as the common threads between peoples' different experiences (work, family life, personal projects). They are not tied to any specific function as are specialized skills, but they develop in all sorts of learning situations and translate into action. Several generic skills often play a decisive role in social, family and professional engagement. This explains why they are considered to be basic skills (ICÉA, 1995, p. 21). Generic skills include a sense of organization, a sense of responsibility, ability to work under pressure, thoroughness, a sense of observation, an ability to adapt, and an ability to resolve problems, etc. Many literacy programs already focus on the recognition and development of generic skills.
**Income maintenance programs or services**
The goal of these programs or services is to provide a minimal income to unemployed adult learners who have undertaken training in order to facilitate their integration into society or the job market. The names of these programs or services may vary from one province to another (social assistance, employment insurance, etc.).

**Integrated literacy development**
The development of various skills among adult learners with low literacy skills using an integrated educational intervention approach. This approach focuses more on literacy development in adults with low literacy skills than on the development of literacy programs as an end in itself. In fact, in this context, all the learning resources can be used to achieve this goal: literacy programs, vocational training programs, parental training programs, and income maintenance or employability support programs. With this new approach, literacy programs, like other adult programs, become complementary measures for developing adult literacy, and not unilateral interventions.

**Integrated programs or services**
Programs or services that combine the resources and mandates of various programs or partners, within the context of joint initiatives resulting from strategic partnerships. These types of programs or services facilitate the development of several types of skills for the particular learner within the same intervention, which is supported by the integrated resources and various mandates of the different partners.

**Learners’ needs (basic learning needs)**
The various skills (including knowledge, attitudes and values) that people need to survive, improve their quality of life, and continue learning (Legendre, 1993).

**Learning obstacles**
We create the conditions essential for learning when we harmonize the subject (learners), object (learning content that is relevant for the subject), agent (trainer or program) and setting (community) components of an andragogical situation (Legendre, 1993). Learning obstacles are elements that prevent the creation of essential learning conditions for adult learners (in this specific case, adults with low literacy skills) by limiting or preventing their participation in training programs meant for them.

**Literacy and literacy levels**
Literacy is defined as a person’s ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities at home, at work, and in the community in order to achieve one’s goals and to develop one’s knowledge and potential. Consequently, in recent international surveys, literacy is evaluated on a scale divided into five levels of skill that can also be classified as “literacy levels.” In these surveys, each literacy level or skill level corresponds to a range of points that the respondents can attain on a 500-point scale. There is a move to replace the measurement of illiteracy with that of literacy; everyone has a certain level of literacy and skills (Jones, 1996; Corbeil, 2006).

**Practitioners**
People whose conscious and voluntary actions are meant to support, stimulate or change a situation, an attitude, an action or diverse relationships in an andragogical situation (Legendre, 1993). They include trainers, curriculum developers, evaluators, program coordinators, program directors and adult education advisors.

**Referral organizations or agencies**
Public organizations or agencies that provide income maintenance or employment support services to unemployed adults or part-time employees and that can direct some of their adult clientele to training services based on criteria set by these organizations or agencies—whose names may vary from one province to another.

**Second-language skills**
These skills relate to learning a second language well enough to meet the specific needs of integration. In the case of Canada’s Francophone and Acadian communities, a functional degree of English could be an addition to the development of their first language in order to allow learners to perform tasks necessary for integration in a predominately Anglophone environment. In a context of literacy development for Francophone adults with low literacy skills, it is important to note that the development of language skills in English as a second language is clearly distinct from learning French as a primary language and from learning English in general as a second language.

**Single entry point or Referral Centre for Adult Training**
In the United Counties of Prescott and Russell, in Ontario, this is a local interagency mechanism that provides adult learners looking to return to training with a common reference, initial assessment and referral system. This mechanism also allows for the local planning and coordination of adult training services through community-level collaboration with partners either directly or indirectly involved in adult training: literacy organizations, educational institutions, postsecondary institutions, other adult training organizations and all the employment support and income maintenance programs (also called referral agencies).
Skills
It is difficult to provide one single definition of the concept of “skills,” and this ambiguity is not without consequences. The definitions provided below distinguish various types of skills, but they all involve the completion of a task by the subject:
- ability of an individual to accomplish complex tasks that require the execution of many operations, tasks similar to those usually involved when practicing an occupation, an art or a profession (Brien, 1989, taken from Legendre, 1993);
- ability of a person to assume a responsibility or perform a task (Landry, 1987);
- a body of knowledge and know-how that helps a person complete, as appropriate, a task or a group of tasks (CMTE, 1992, taken from Legendre, 1993).

A skill is always a combination of knowledge, the ability to implement this knowledge, and attitudes—meaning those mental dispositions needed for this implementation (Haut Conseil de l’Éducation in France). A skill can be broken down into knowledge, know-how (practices), and savoir-être (interpersonal skills, or relational behaviours), as well as physical abilities.

Skills training
Training that helps the learner acquire the core basic qualifications or acquire the entire body of minimal qualifications required and needed in order to perform the duties of a profession (Legendre, 1993).

Specialized parenting skills or parental skills
The purpose of these skills is to ensure the harmonious development of children who are able to function well in a given society; they are based on the exercise of specific behavioural and relational abilities, attitudes, values and beliefs. They are generally associated with parental functions and not commonly recognized as literacy skills.

Specialized skills in vocational training
Technical skills necessary to practice a trade. They are usually associated with work tasks and are offered by specialized agencies in an institutional setting (community colleges and educational institutions) or in a workplace settings (employers or unions).

Strategic partnerships
Partnerships that allow organizations working in the field of adult education to affiliate themselves with relevant local partners in order to offer integrated training programs or services that are appropriate for an adult clientele with low literacy skills in their area. These adapted programs strategically accommodate the specific needs of this clientele, including its literacy levels and learning obstacles.

Technological strategies or abilities
Strategies or abilities needed to use software, tap into resources on the Internet, and undertake distance training; they also help support the learners in the learning process. Although these abilities are often included indistinguishably in the full range of literacy skills within a more traditional training context, they are distinct from essential skills; they can be developed in different ways according to the nature of the training project.

Training program for adults with low literacy skills
A training program that targets adults situated at levels 1 and 2 of the IALSS; the program’s learning objectives focus on the development of basic skills (essential and generic skills) and any other skills deemed necessary to fulfill the needs of the target clientele within a given context.

Under-educated adult
An adult who may have received academic education, but who did not complete a high school diploma.
For some years now, the FCAF has been trying to take a fresh look at the situation of Francophone adults with low literacy skills and the educational resources available to them. In so doing, the FCAF hopes to pave the way for approaches that are more adapted to the needs of these adults. These approaches are based on a global vision of literacy development in Francophone communities rather than on the delivery of literacy services as such.

As a result, the main objective of this document is to help practitioners interested in adult training and education to broaden their outlook with regard to opportunities to design and develop training programs for adults with low literacy skills. These new perspectives are based on the integration of various public services through strategic partnerships. An analysis of the complex needs of adults with low literacy skills and the development of an inter-program partnership approach provides the backdrop of our document.

These questions are not new to Francophone communities and the FCAF. Already, in 1997, within the context of a consultation process on literacy challenges for Francophone minorities in Canada, Roy suggested the following:

Projects that focus more on literacy than on literacy education, and whose activities are rooted in the life of the community, will tend to be viewed more positively by Francophones and will contribute to social dynamism. Such efforts to expand literacy training also help create stronger links with other organizations and will eventually lead to an improved sharing of the responsibility for literacy development... What are the urgent issues affecting our communities with regard to employment, school drop-outs, and life conditions? How can literacy-related actions help solve these problems? How can we increase the number of positive initiatives that link literacy training to other social problems? (Roy, 1997, p. 42; free translation)

Towards an Integrated Model to Support the Literacy Development of Francophones in Canada supports this line of thinking, with the hopes of going even further with a practical application in the field of adult training.

In the first part of the document, the section “From literacy training to literacy development: Why this paradigm shift?” explains what led the FCAF “towards a new model of practice.” The second part presents the literacy development model and its four components, while the third section, “An Illustration of the Model,” provides a better understanding of the theoretical framework through a tangible and practical example from the field.

The fourth and fifth sections of the document describe and then analyze the advantages and challenges of a model of this type for adult learners, partners and communities. And finally, we are convinced that you will find the conclusion fascinating, with its boldness and vision of a model that tends “towards a learning community.”
Towards an Integrated Model to Support the Literacy Development of Francophones in Canada

1.1 From literacy training to literacy development: Why this paradigm shift?

The socio-economic changes of the last few decades have had serious repercussions on the workplace and in other spheres of peoples’ lives. In this context, the world of adult education is under enormous pressure to adapt both quickly and continuously. That said, this evolution has helped to further complicate the adult education systems in Canada, making them less effective and more incompatible when it comes to meeting the more sophisticated and ever-changing needs of the labour market. The effects of these rapid changes have been felt for several years now already.

In this respect, Rowen (1998) says the enormous pressure being exerted on adult training systems ultimately leads to more institutional barriers for learners, particularly for those with little education. According to Myers and de Brucker (2006), participation in adult learning in Canada is well below international standards. Canada has lower participation rates in employment training than many developed countries, including the United States. What is more, there is also a disturbing and widespread trend: adult training resources always reach the most qualified workers.

Researchers attribute these problems to adult training systems that are complex, inconsistent and incomplete. They are complex because sometimes several programs in the same area have similar mandates with participation criteria that are often complicated. They are inconsistent because these programs function for the most part in silos and in a unilateral fashion—more in competition than in collaboration with each other. Furthermore, they are more closely aligned with “institutional” needs than with the real needs of the target clientele. Lastly, they are incomplete because they lack complementarity with other services, all too often leaving gaps in the continuum of community services.

Rowen (1998) takes the same position. He points out that unemployed people have access to various parallel systems for employment support and training that operate autonomously, which adds to the complexity and inconsistency of services. This complexity and inconsistency creates a certain amount of confusion. Rowen also observes that while some have similar objectives for socio-professional integration, they do so with little collaboration. Paradoxically, these parallel systems lead to much unwanted duplication, but produce few joint actions. What is more, the programs do not necessarily respond adequately to peoples’ requirements for upgrading and training.

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1 Few government bodies have used the policy instruments available to encourage workplaces to develop human resources training. Only Quebec has a “train or pay” policy (large companies with more than $1 million in payroll must spend 1% of this amount on training).
An analysis by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2003, taken from Gobeil, 2006) of measures adopted by nine countries that participated in a thematic review of adult training shows a similar trend. According to the OECD, although most policies recognize the importance of adult populations articulating their training needs, few institutional mechanisms are keeping track of it. The conclusion of this analysis is important:

“The lion’s share of adult training is driven by supply, with the training programs that address adult needs based to a large degree on those in the institutional education system meant for young people” (OECD, 2003, taken from Gobeil, 2006, p. 86; free translation).

Interviews conducted during the course of the OECD’s study revealed that in the vast majority of educational institutions, the emphasis is first and foremost on the service offer, and that service offer over determines the demand. Interested adults register for the programs and services that are being offered. Generally speaking, training activities are rarely organized in response to an individual or collective demand, except in the case of in-company training (Gobeil, 2006, p. 16 of the summary document).

There is a common thread, particularly in educational institutions:

Most organizations have not, or have only to small degree, shifted towards actions that focus first and foremost on the articulation of an individual and a collective training need. In general, actions taken upstream of training are more focused on promoting services, with a view to increasing registration numbers (Gobeil, 2006, p. 18 of the summary document; free translation).

A diagnosis of the services offered to learners

In his diagnosis of the situation in the adult education environment, Rowen (1998) identified various problems\(^2\). To begin with, he noted that in literacy and basic training programs, very few learner referrals originate from other adult training programs. On the one hand, very few learners from literacy and basic training programs join other training programs. On the other, very few learners who have been refused by training programs other than literacy training end up in literacy and basic training programs. Consequently, many learners “fall through the cracks” of the various programs. Why does this happen?

According to Rowen (1998), this situation is caused for the most part by the lack of well-defined assessment and referral systems between the various programs. Referrals are considered to be time consuming and require trust between the partners. There is a certain amount of reticence about negotiating formal agreements, for fear of losing flexibility. Most referrals between programs are done in an informal fashion, and the assessment procedures remain incompatible or even non-existent.

Secondly, Rowen (1998) notes there is a general perception among adult education practitioners that the decisions about referrals made by employment support and income maintenance organizations are based more on the needs of their programs than on the needs of the learners. In general, referral mechanisms are the responsibility of local organizations, lack transparency, and are not really focused on the needs of learners. Employment support and income maintenance programs\(^3\) seem to prefer formal programs, and more specifically those with a limited and pre-determined duration. Some practitioners from these organizations avoid literacy and basic education programs because they consider the process too long with no clear prospect of returning to work or regaining independence. Their actions are based on increasingly limited criteria that favour short-term training (speedy workforce integration programs) or well-known programs (accredited or college courses) at the expense of the nevertheless obvious needs of some adults (e.g.: essential skills that fall below the requirements of new jobs, poorly developed general skills, weak or no computer skills, few specialized and recognized vocational skills, etc.).

Rowen (1998) also notes significant flaws in the continuum of training services in some regions. In some cases, the programs are simply non-existent—when it is not the support, assessment or referral services that are missing or lacking—thereby making the training pathways difficult to follow. Rowen also highlights the following problem: there is very little recognition of prior learning from one program to another; a learner is often forced to start many similar activities over when moving to a new program. Rowen mentions that learners are often ill prepared to undertake training in a new program and that inter-program relationships, although few in number, dissolve when staff leave.

\(^2\) It is important to note that Rowen’s analyses and findings are taken from a consultative process involving practitioners, managers and public servants working in adult education in Ontario, as well as a comprehensive literature review involving other public administrations from other Canadian provinces, the United States and other Commonwealth countries.

\(^3\) They are commonly called referral programs in the educational environment: social assistance, employment insurance, etc.
1.2 Possible courses of action

In the 1990s, potential solutions were proposed for making the adult literacy education systems—whether they be in Canada or elsewhere in the world—more comprehensive and consistent. In the Agenda for the Future of the 5th International Conference on Adult Education (in Hamburg, in 1997), the following recommendations, inter alia, were made:

- to replace the narrow vision of literacy with learning that meets social, economic and policy needs and gives expression to a new form of citizenship;
- to integrate literacy training and other forms of education, as well as the learning of basic skills into all development projects where appropriate…

Rowen (1999) takes the same position by proposing that program jurisdictions be clarified from the start (which program for which type of learner) in order to better fill the gaps in the continuum of services, all while developing joint, integrated programs where needed. His argument is based on the fact that if the learner is a whole person with multiple and complex needs, the solutions for meeting these needs must be comprehensive and integrated. For example, for adults with low literacy skills, Rowen proposes various possibilities:

- Integration of literacy and vocational training;
- Integration of literacy and accredited training;
- Integration of literacy and employment support programs;
- For clients with special needs, integration of literacy and other support services;
- Integration of literacy and second-language training (for Francophone’s, second-language training in English) in relation to the needs of returning to work.

As an example, we identified an interesting experiment with integrated programs in the United States. Sticht (1997) provides an overview of a vocational training program that allowed for the integration of both basic skills and technical skills in an electronics technician course. Reading, writing, document use and problem-solving skills were incorporated directly into the technical and vocational skills. In this “cognitive system” model, basic skills are not treated as separate skills to be developed before undertaking the professional development process, or even outside of this process. On the contrary, in this model, basic skills are better developed using electronics as a basis; in the meantime, the learning of electronics benefits from the strategic development of skills in mathematics, reading, and problem solving, etc. As Sticht explains,

This integration of literacy and mathematics training serves several purposes. First, by teaching basic skills within the context of technical course content, students can understand the functional utility of reading and mathematic concepts. Hence, they are motivated to increase both their technical skills and their literacy and math skills. Just as technical topics are connected with something students already know about. Second, the presentation of technical and basic skills instruction together eliminates the need for remedial courses students might need to take before receiving technical instruction. Combining the two types of training shortens total training time. This is of special importance for out of school youth and adults because it permits them to move out into the labor market sooner, and it gives learners less time to get frustrated and drop out of training (Sticht, 1997, Chap. 9, Case study No. 3).

Myers and de Broucker (2006) note that, despite considerable investment and much effort by the provinces to improve adult education systems, they remain complex, fragmented and incomplete. In particular, there are significant gaps with regard to coordination, information and counselling, financial assistance, employer support and governmental investment. These researchers propose nevertheless to increase public investment in basic skills training, but to do so in a targeted manner, by supporting
either new or existing innovative programs. They propose that governments develop a collaborative strategy with a view to meeting the needs of adult learners, for example: simplifying the system, creating coordinating entities for adult education, and ensuring easier access to information on training possibilities.

In short, these elements show us there is a need, among other things, to develop a better articulation between the various programs and services in the adult education system. That said, how can we guide this paradigm shift for Francophone adults with low literacy skills in Canada, given their many cultural and demographic realities (such as the social and cultural contexts related to the French fact and the minority status of French in many settings)? In the next sections, we will attempt to answer this question, as well as two others:

What is the best way to promote and improve the literacy of Francophones throughout all of French-speaking communities, both locally and nationally, and to not just promote literacy training in French? How can we benefit from this new concept in order to enhance literacy practices, recruitment techniques, research and training projects, etc.? (Roy, 1997, p. 37; free translation)

… through the strategic repositioning of literacy programs as community leaders in literacy development!

Indeed, the emergence of integrated programs for people with low literacy skills is a particularly powerful way for organizations that deliver literacy programs to develop new expertise with partners, to receive the recognition needed to fulfill their mandate, and to strengthen their place in their community. The model being proposed here allows these organizations to position themselves as both organizations complementary to other public services and as essential partners for reaching a clientele with low literacy skills, since several joint initiatives could be developed from their services and their expertise. We recommend therefore that the key players in these organizations take on a leadership role in their respective communities in order to create a local culture of collaboration for the development of services for adults with low literacy skills. Consequently, literacy programs could be more effective in reaching their natural clientele in order to offer these people services that are enhanced and integrated and that better respond to their myriad of complex needs.
Towards an Integrated Model to Support the Literacy Development of Francophones in Canada

The model that we are proposing focuses more on the development of literacy than on the development of literacy learning per se, which is sometimes considered an end in itself. Indeed, in a paradigm that supports first and foremost the development of literacy among adults with low literacy skills, all programs can be used to this end: literacy programs, general training or school education programs, vocational training programs, parental skills or family literacy skills development programs, and income maintenance and employment support programs alike. In the new model being proposed, literacy programs—like other programs being offered to adults—become complementary ways to ensure the flourishing of adult literacy. We therefore want to move away from interventions that are too unilateral, carried out in silos, and more concerned with internal accountability, and that are too focused on the programs and institutions whose own existence becomes all too often the ultimate goal.

The model and its four components

The proposed model is constructed around integrated services and is based on a finding from the most recent international surveys on adult literacy, where literacy skills are compared to muscles: the more they are used, regardless of context, the better they are maintained and the more quickly they improve. This is why we believe that an integrated educational services approach does not curb the development of literacy skills, compared to a traditional full-time literacy training program. Indeed, literacy skills can be maintained and developed as much in a real context (e.g.: personal and professional development, real communication or parental development) as in a more educational-style literacy training context, where the focus is exclusively on the more abstract learning of reading, writing and mathematics. The model’s four components are as follows: analyzing the environment; creating strategic local partnerships; constructing adapted andragogical interventions; feedback and reassessment of actions.
Even though we are presenting them one after the other, the model’s four components should not be perceived in a linear fashion. A sound approach to developing interventions based on the model would be to analyze and work on each of the components simultaneously and in an interconnected manner. The components should influence each other, in a continuing dynamic of service development.

In this respect, one component does not necessarily stop where another one begins, because there are areas of overlap and interdependence between each. The model should therefore always propose andragogical analyses and interventions that are progressing and evolving in a community.
2.1 First component: Analyzing the environment

All across Canada and around the world, we can see that a large proportion of the so-called “natural” clientele for adult literacy training programs has only minimally been reached through traditional recruitment efforts (OECD, 2003, taken from Gobeil, 2006). It seems therefore that the strategies used have been unsuccessful in getting around the training barriers facing adult learners, particularly those learners with low literacy skills. The recruitment and retention of learners in training, and more specifically in literacy training, remain problematic; and there is a constant need to innovate. The socio-economic conditions of communities and the needs of the local population remain critical challenges for reaching people. This first component, which is too often ignored or taken for granted, is nevertheless an essential lever for encouraging the articulation of learners’ needs for training (Bélanger and Voyer, 2004). Moreover, we believe there is a vital link between gaining a better understanding of the environment in which adults with low literacy skills are living and developing new training services that are better integrated and better adapted to their needs.

2.1.1 Analyzing the needs of adult learners: The very core of an andragogical intervention

Adult learners have multiple and complex needs. Most need to produce and to work, to earn an income for themselves and their family. All want the best job possible, and in this respect, they have personal projects aimed at integrating the workforce or finding a better job when they are already working. For this, some may need to communicate better in English in a workplace where French is the minority language and the working language is often English. They also have other family needs, such as providing the best possible support and guidance to their children in order to facilitate their educational and emotional development. Similarly, in a cultural context where Francophones are a minority, where the risks of assimilation are real, and where the establishment of a Francophone education system is recent and tenuous, the needs might be to provide better family-centred literacy training practices to the parents. Adults also need to be successful in various personal projects (return to training, volunteering, recreation, etc.). And lastly, they also need access to knowledge in order to better understand the world and the community in which they live.

It is difficult to study the needs of adults because they are distinct from one individual to another, yet part of the broader reality of communities. In this particular case, we need to ask ourselves how to develop the literacy skills needed to meet the diverse needs identified previously and to formulate projects that will meet a collective need of the community.

However, in order to resolve the serious problems facing them, individuals and communities must understand, organize themselves, act, and anticipate. This cannot be done by neutralizing the common, traditional knowledge (savoir populaire) and experience of the people concerned, as we often see in training programs. To be more effective, strategies must be appropriate locally and be rooted in the local cultures and traditions. Survival or development of initiatives of this type occur wherever there is a link between common, traditional (savoir populaire) and modern knowledge in the experimentation of new forms of action (Hautecoeur, 2000, p. 26; free translation).

As a result, presumably, the less developed the literacy skills of the individuals or groups of individuals are, the more solutions being proposed to meet the various needs must be complex. As an example, we can presume that the training needs of the workforce increase in complexity when the literacy levels of certain adult Francophones in the workforce are lower. In particular, their training needs increase in complexity when the jobs available are in an English language environment…

Think, for example, of the many challenges in meeting the needs of Francophone parents who want to help their children along their educational pathway, when some individual parents have low literacy skills and, collectively, when there is no rich and stimulating Francophone environment outside of the French language elementary school.

Further complexities must be added to the equation. When they decide to undertake training, adults with low literacy skills face many learning and training obstacles. The institutional and psychosocial barriers identified in many studies (see Bélanger and Voyer, 2004, and Lavoie et al., 2004) constitute a major hurdle to participation in a training program. The main obstacles include negative labelling, which often affects the confidence and abilities of people with low literacy skills (psychosocial obstacles), problems accessing programs, schedules, inadequate content, etc. (institutional obstacles). Training, as an answer to the integration needs in an employment or personal project, a family support project, a personal development project, and a general literacy development project, faces therefore many challenges to ensuring the effective participation of adults with low literacy skills.

In this respect, consider the far too many structural obstacles in our own programs. The definition of the jurisdictions in most programs is too narrow with respect to the complexity and the diversity of learners with low literacy skills needs; this makes it difficult to integrate them into valued personal initiatives within a reasonable timeframe, taking into account the many responsibilities that adults have. The programs operate in a vacuum,
without any interaction, and this comes at the expense of adults and their learning needs.

We recommend that practitioners in adult education have a good understanding of the consequences that adults’ literacy levels can have on the satisfaction of their needs and on their motivation. We also recommend a good understanding on a local level of the various learning and training obstacles that a learner with low literacy skills might be facing, so that novel and sustainable solutions can be found to reduce the effects and help retain these learners in a training program, a job, or any other area of activity in the community. The needs analysis therefore includes an assessment of each person’s needs, but also an understanding of these needs in the broader context of their community.

2.1.2 Analyzing the socio-economic context

In this new and shifting economy with its increasing demands, people with low literacy skills are finding it more and more difficult to keep up with the changing world of work. Many jobs that have been created in a context of increasing global competitiveness also require increasingly high literacy skills (Wagner, taken from Corbeil, 2006). It becomes therefore even more important for the practitioners in adult education to identify what employment sectors are available and relevant in the community for learners with lower literacy skills.

When developing a training service to facilitate the socio-professional integration of adults with low literacy skills, there is a need to identify very quickly the trades and occupations that are relevant to them and their community. It is a matter, therefore, of identifying the specific economic sectors wherein trades and occupations might be available to adults at levels 1 and 2 of the IALSS. There is also a need to identify in which sectors it is possible to develop work integration programs that allow for literacy training and other more specialized vocational or technical training to be combined in one single intervention. The targeted sectors or trades must be accessible to adults with lower literacy skills on the one hand, and lead to jobs for which there is a demand in the community on the other. In this regard, it is important to identify and briefly analyze the labour needs in local communities:

- Identify, using the community’s needs as a starting point, any expanding economic sectors that have specific workforce requirements;
- Focus on the jobs in these economic sectors that require skills for which the training is not overly advanced.

We can already identify economic sectors with this type of trade or occupation that have had successful socio-professional integration experiences with a clientele possessing lower literacy skills:

- Food industry (cook, food services assistant);
- Sales and services industry (sales clerk, parts clerk);
- Construction and manufacturing trades (welder, industrial mechanic millwright);
- Agricultural (horticultural technician);
- Early childhood industry (early childhood educator, teacher’s assistant);
- Health industry (health services officer);
- Administrative and commercial industries (office clerk, bookkeeping clerk).

2.1.3 Analyzing the cultural context

As previously mentioned, people with low literacy skills find it increasingly difficult to follow shifts in the new economy, where new jobs demand even higher literacy skills. Francophones living in a minority situation, because of their historically lower literacy profile, are doubly disadvantaged in this new economic perspective. What is more, Francophones living in a minority situation must integrate an Anglo dominant environment where available jobs often require a knowledge of English, something that represents an even bigger challenge when they have low literacy skills (Wagner, taken from Corbeil, 2006).

Any basic training measure is linked to the natural and cultural environment, a place bearing the traces of unique history and experiences: memories, shapes, an aesthetic, feelings, works of art. This place is the foundation of any local training... A question of short-term survival, a long-term regeneration project (Hautecoeur, 2000, p. 26; free translation).

In addition, the status of the primary language in the community and the social relations with the majority group become essential elements to consider when analyzing the environment. The cultural approach that Roy

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4 The examples of successful socio-professional experiences with people with low literacy skills are trades specific to Ontario. The naming conventions and requirements in terms of types of certificates, certifications or diplomas for similar trades will vary from one province to another.
proposes (1997) for planning community-based educational interventions expresses quite well this idea:

A cultural approach takes greater account of the language of communication and the domination and assimilation relationships experienced by the minority groups... Language in this case is central to the concerns about adult education, since it is defined as the key element in developing an identity, an expression and a culture. A cultural approach understands that illiterate people who speak the minority language are doubly excluded. On the one hand, they have historically had less access to an education... On the other, they must live and communicate in a context where their language and their culture have little presence, if not little value. The success of this literacy approach corresponds therefore, for a linguistic minority group, to the affirmation of its maternal language in the different spheres of life, to taking back ownership of its culture, and to the use of all means of communication (and training) that it needs in order to survive and evolve (Roy, 1997, p. 35-36; free translation).

It therefore seems important for local practitioners to fully understand the possible effects that the cultural context has on the local dynamics of adult training and to clearly identify to what extent certain cultural realities can represent learning and training obstacles for Francophone adults with low literacy skills (particularly the social relationships between the cultural groups and the predominant language in the workplace, usually English). In this respect, new interventions must take some of these cultural elements into account.

2.1.4 Analyzing the structure of local educational services

The results of one study (Lurette and Dugas, 2003) show there are many educational resources available in communities, from a variety of sources, and they all have a mission of meeting the needs of adult learners. However, there is a twofold problem: there is sometimes duplication of certain services, but there is sometimes a vacuum (a gap) between the programs and the services. The study's authors conclude that these local resources could be used more effectively.

In Canada, in general, populations with low literacy skills do not always have their needs met by the available resources, whether they be actual adult training resources or resources earmarked for learner support. Training interventions are not always relevant to the many and complex needs of learners and their community, because their accountability goals are focused mostly on the programs and institutions rather than on the needs of their clientele. Moreover, adults with low literacy skills bear the brunt of an accountability process that too often leads to competition between programs and between organizations.

That said, we need to reflect upon how to maximize the use of resources in order to offer learners with low literacy skills quality and low-cost training services that allow for the following:

- To take their learning and training obstacles into account, and thereby further promote participation and retention in training;
- To provide them with training that is qualifying and recognized;
- To bear in mind the cultural context and the role of the French language in the community (in an Anglo-dominant society).

Starting from these resources, it would be easier to plan andragogical interventions that meet the needs of adult learners, while staying rooted in a socio-economic and cultural context specific to the community to which they belong.
2.2 Second component: Creating strategic local partnerships

The proposed literacy development model involves developing novel approaches in order to create appropriate links between the needs of adults with low literacy skills from a community and the available adult education resources. From this perspective, it is important for practitioners in adult education to fully understand the needs of adults with low literacy skills and the contexts in which they could meet them. To do this, we propose implementing a local collaboration process which would help to ensure a more in-depth analysis of the local environment through the sharing of various viewpoints and to create new alliances between organizations with a view to offering local adult education programming that is more relevant to and consistent with the needs of adults with low literacy skills.

2.2.1 Mobilizing the community’s educational resources

When creating projects using the recommended model, it is important that practitioners keep a broad perspective of the needs of adult learners with low literacy skills with regard to the multitude of skills they must develop to fulfill their needs. It is from this standpoint that the practitioners could more effectively design and offer diversified training projects in a given community. To do so, we believe it is important to mobilize around the same collaborative framework various partners that offer the learner training services or support services and that, in one way or another, are likely to meet with people who have significant needs around literacy levels.

Who might these partners be? They include organizations providing literacy and basic training programs, formal educational programs, vocational training programs or even socio-professional integration or social integration programs, or any other type of adult training in the community, as well all the learner support programs (e.g.: employment support, income maintenance, social support, etc.). There are also other community partners who have an interest in adult training, such as municipalities or certain social and community groups, and certain Francophone groups in a minority setting that play a key role in the development of French-language literacy skills in an Anglo-dominant environment (e.g.: school, library, recreational centre). Through this collaborative strategy, we believe it is easier to understand the extent and the nature of the needs of adults with low literacy skills, to recognize the learning and training obstacles that they commonly face, and to identify all the skill types they must develop in order to meet their needs. It will then be easier to reach out to them, because the solutions being proposed will provide more relevant responses to a range of needs and life projects.

2.2.2 Developing a local adult education planning process

By uniting all strategic partners around a local adult education collaborative framework, we are promoting dialogue between partners, which provides for better planning of local services being offered to adults in general and to adults with low literacy skills in particular. With good local planning based on an analysis of the environment, a community can create new training projects that will fulfill emerging needs, adapt existing training activities in order to respond to needs that are better understood or better defined, or even regroup similar training activities. As an example, this helps to avoid frequently occurring situations whereby a practically identical course is being offered by two or three organizations, but it is not actually given because of the low registration rates in each program. A partnership would allow the local population to have access to this course, through a better management of the supply and demand for training in a given area. This aspect is especially interesting for rural and minority communities, given their limited resources.

In short, a collaborative planning approach makes it possible to not limit each other’s efforts in recruiting learners with a view to launching a targeted program, but rather to analyze the global demand among all adults with low literacy skills in the community in order to respond in partnership. The more we analyze the needs of the community, the more we are opting for an “articulation of the demand” logic rather than for a “supply” logic.

This mobilization of partners in training and support for learners with low literacy skills under one single collaborative framework can take several forms: a local round table on adult education, a roundtable on local planning, a single entry point for adult education, a training project committee, etc. It is important to have all strategic partners sit down together to first take stock of the needs of adults and the community with regard to literacy and skills; this should then lead to the development of a shared vision and the planning and design of appropriate andragogical interventions with strategic partnerships being created as a result.

5 All these partners, even if some are indirectly involved in adult training, may be important for creating a partnership dynamic and ensuring the development of a learning community.
2.2.3 Establishing a single entry point for adult training

With time, as the dialogue between partnering organizations reaches the maturity required, the establishment of a more permanent framework for offering services in the form of a “single entry point” could be an interesting outcome; it could be the first joint and structured project for the community’s adult education training network. Above and beyond collaboration, the analysis of the community’s needs and the local planning of complementary services, the single entry point encourages the sharing of resources with a view to centralizing various common services:

- Centralizing resources in order to establish a joint reference, assessment and referral service for adults looking to return to training;
- Centralizing resources in order to implement joint awareness and recruitment strategies for adult learners;
- Pooling resources to help coordinate strategic partnerships for the design and delivery of joint training interventions.

Centralizing resources in order to establish a joint reference, assessment and referral service for adults looking to return to training

A single entry point could offer common reference, initial assessment and referral services to all learners who have been referred to it, using common protocols designed for this purpose. With this single entry point, adults who are exploring the possibility of returning to training all follow the same assessment procedures in order to be referred to the appropriate program based on a training plan that takes into account the needs of the learner, his or her level of literacy and any other information considered necessary (e.g.: the learner’s educational level, the administrative requirements of his or her referring agency, any potential obstacles to participation, etc.).

To facilitate the development of better adapted programs, it is critical to properly identify the literacy levels of adult learners in the community and to have a good picture of their actual basic skills in order to design and offer tailored training programs. In this respect, we believe it is highly advantageous for a community to systemically cluster their assessment services for basic skills (literacy and others) and for learner needs into one centralized place, such as a single entry point.

That said, diagnostic assessment practices that contribute to a better knowledge and understanding of the basic skill levels and needs of adult learners are not as common as one might think in adult training programs. By introducing such practices in a systemic fashion, we believe it becomes easier to avoid certain psychosocial obstacles (e.g.: correcting misperceptions that many adults might have about their skills level) and certain institutional obstacles (e.g.: a better link between the needs and basic skills of learners and an appropriate training initiative). As a result, it becomes easier for practitioners to identify groups of Francophone adults that have similar needs, to determine their profile with regard to their actual level of skills (literacy level), to make the links between this profile and the needs of the community (e.g.: workforce needs), and to set the stage for either the adaptation or creation of training activities or training projects that will meet these needs that are now better understood.

Centralizing resources in order to implement joint awareness and recruitment strategies for adult learners

We also believe it is more effective for a given milieu to put forward adult training programs though a joint offering, irrespective of specific service providers. Joint communication, awareness, promotion, and recruitment strategies represent the second critical element in favour of a single entry point approach.

In our opinion, this makes it easier to reach potential adult learners, simply by avoiding several obstacles to going back to training. Through a shared service offering using a single-entry-point approach, each service provider is not required to offer piecemeal training services and to attempt to recruit learners directly for each of its services; the single entry point provides adults with access to the entire range of training services offered from one single platform. The single entry point therefore helps to change, in the eyes of the general public, the perception of an adult education system that is too complex and inflexible (Lurette, 2008, p. 16; free translation).

What is more, this joint strategy helps to consolidate recruitment and registration activities. It then becomes easier to set up training activities that are likely to function smoothly (avoids duplication and decreases competition between programs, concentrates the resources and promotes complementarity between programs). A strategy like this one is particularly relevant in a rural or semi-urban setting and in a minority setting where the educational resources are more limited and where it may be difficult to assemble enough cohorts of learners to ensure the sustainability of certain programs.
Setting out guidelines for joint initiatives

By their very nature, joint training initiatives explicitly establish common operational procedures that must be developed by consensus among partnering organizations. They encourage partners to expand their operating procedures in order to move towards more horizontal management (inter-program); partnering organizations must however maintain their internal management practices in order to meet the accountability requirements of their own financial backers. To equip themselves with common rules or procedures for the collaborative projects, partners can therefore create supervisory committees or joint inter-organizational committees to set out the guidelines for each initiative.

The initial role of these committees is to formulate clear partnership agreements, which are often needed to reach such a common management and delivery mode. These committees can include representatives from each partnering organization; they ensure that the jurisdictions and administrative requirements of each program are respected, while also ensuring the joint project functions well. Partnership agreements force the partners involved to define their respective jurisdictions in order to meet the specific needs of learners (e.g.: who offers which training service, who offers transportation services or other services?) and to strategically pool certain resources in order to respond to more complex needs.

Building trust among partners

The establishment of agreements to support joint services should ensure, between partnering organizations, inter-program referrals and define shared referral and registration procedures. It might also be interesting to enter into specific referral agreements with social assistance or income maintenance agencies, because their clientele could often benefit from such services. In this new context, the same learner can receive services from several service providers at the same time. The partners’ programs would now be perceived as complementary and not as competitors; a relationship of trust can establish itself more easily between the training partners and between the learner support partners.

These approaches also decrease the individual workload of each partnering organization in terms of the resources normally needed to carry out these functions, which are now centralized. As a result, jurisdiction agreements allow partners to better cope with the new financial realities in adult education.

2.2.4 Developing collaborative agreements and strategic partnerships in order to make andragogical interventions operational

Dialogue between partnering organizations, driven by the local collaborative framework, should gradually lead them to reach formal or informal agreements. These agreements are the foundation of collaborative, integrated training programs, which ultimately lead to greater cohesion among the service offers made to adults in a given community. These agreements may serve several functions.
2.3 Third component: Constructing an andragogical intervention adapted to the needs of learners, the community and the partnering organizations

Dialogue between partnering organizations could lead to the adaptation of existing training programs or the implementation of new training programs that meet the needs of adults, while still respecting the mandates of the various partnering organizations. It will therefore be easier, by organizing a joint program offering, to access the diverse human and financial resources needed to provide even more educational services to adults (e.g.: smaller trainer-learner ratio, individualized training plans, adapted training and assessment arrangements, targeted basic training, etc.) and logistical support (e.g.: transportation and child care services). In the end, all of this leads to a greater collective capacity on the part of the community to offer better services to adults with low literacy skills.

When designing such projects, it is important to keep a broad perspective of the needs of adults with low literacy skills, so as to better identify the multiple skills they must develop in order to pursue a professional or personal project of interest to them and that meets their needs.

2.3.1 Literacy skills and specific skills likely to meet the needs of adults with low literacy skills

We will now attempt to analyze the various types of skills that might need to be developed given the needs of adults with low literacy skills.

Programs offered to adults with low literacy skills are too often narrow and do not take into account the entire range of their needs. As a result, most training services prioritize the acquisition of specific and technical skills that respond more to defined program requirements. For example, some services focus on the development of workplace integration or employability skills; this is particularly true in the case of new employment support programs. Other services focus on the acquisition of technical skills, such as trades training or vocational training programs; others concentrate uniquely on the development of parental skills. And finally, most literacy programs often focus solely on improving certain basic skills (reading, writing, numeracy, computer use). In short, very few adult education services attempt to develop more than one type of skill—in an integrated manner—under a single initiative. That said, we believe the traditional approach adopted by literacy programs, like other types of programs, is too restrictive; it does not allow practitioners to effectively meet the needs of learners or to take their living context into account.

In this respect, we believe an effective andragogical intervention for adults with low literacy skills must take into account a multitude of skills they need to develop in order to achieve their personal learning objectives. These diverse skills must fit together seamlessly: sometimes one completes the other in the learning process, and sometimes one supports the other. To achieve this, there is a need to identify these types of skills and to fully understand their relationships with each other.

Various types of skills are worthy of being developed within an integrated literacy development approach. We have divided them into three categories:

Literacy-related skills (essential skills, generic skills, and second-language skills); skills that are specific to social and professional roles (vocational or technical skills, parental skills and other types of need-specific skills); learning and integration support strategies or abilities.

Note that for each of these skills, it is the learners’ needs, depending on the desired integration project, that determine to what extent each skill type merits being further developed and to what degree the service offering should take this into account.

I - Literacy-related skills

Literacy-related skills are the building blocks for learning all the other types of skills; they allow people to evolve and adapt to change. They provide adults with a foundation on which the learning of new, more specialized skills can be based. We have identified three types of basic skills that seem appealing and complementary, in order to illustrate the development of adult literacy as understood by the proposed model.

The nine essential skills are the result of extensive research conducted by the Canadian government and other national and international organizations. These nine fundamental skills enable the learning of all kinds of other skills (Collège Boréal, 2006, taken from Lurette, 2008). The skills are as follows: reading texts, document use, numeracy, writing, oral communication, working with others, thinking skills, computer use, and continuous learning.
These skills allow adults to fully participate in the labour market and the community; they represent an interesting foundation for a strategic approach to literacy development. Note the following elements:

- The essential skills are located within a frame of reference that is recognized across Canada.
- Given their number, these nine skills allow training practitioners to expand the spectrum of intervention and to work at developing new skills that go beyond the traditional literacy programs (e.g.: document use, working with others, continuous learning, etc.).
- They are situated on a skills continuum that is relevant to all adults and that can be constantly improved, from a perspective of lifelong learning.
- They are meant to be used in real situations (tasks), which make them compatible with specialized and technical skills.

**Generic skills** (soft skills) act as common threads between the different peoples’ experiences (work, family life, personal projects). Similar to essential skills, generic skills are not tied to any specific function in the way that specialized skills are; they develop in all sorts of learning situations and translate into action. Some generic skills often play a decisive role in social, family and professional engagement. This explains why they are considered to be basic skills (ICÉA, 1995, p. 21). They must be recognized and developed in order to facilitate the integration of learners into work settings and other personal projects. By their very nature, these generic skills facilitate the transfer from a formal learning environment to an integration environment. This is why, in an integrated literacy development approach, it is suggested that attention be paid systematically to each educational intervention.

**Second-language skills** refer to learning a second language well enough to meet the specific needs of integration. As a result, it may be necessary for Francophones and immigrants to gain a basic knowledge of English in order to integrate into a new environment (a job, vocational training program, personal project, etc.). In the case of Canada’s Francophone and Acadian communities, a functional level of English could enhance the development of their first language and allow learners to perform tasks required in a predominantly English integration environment. In the context of literacy development for Francophone adults with low literacy skills, it is important to note that the development of functional language skills in English as a second language is clearly distinct from learning French as a first language and from generally learning English as a second language. All the educational interventions that we are recommending here are based on undertaking learning and on developing skills in French (whether it be the development of essential skills, generic skills, or other types of specialized skills). We can however add to them, in certain situations and according to certain needs expressed by learners, the learning of functional and contextual skills in English (or bilingual) to facilitate learner integration.

The three types of skills mentioned appear to be of vital importance in an integrated literacy development approach, particularly for a clientele with low literacy skills. These skills represent, in our opinion, the building blocks for developing all other types of skills.

**II - Skills specific to social or professional roles**

Skills that are specific to social or professional roles refer to tasks that are related to the implicit and specific roles that adults play in their lives, whether it be that of parents, citizens, or workers. An approach that is based on skills integration is designed to ensure that learners with low literacy skills can undertake the development of vocational or parental skills, for example, while simultaneously pursuing the development of literacy skills.

Specialized skills in vocational training are technical skills that enable people to practice a trade. They are usually associated with work functions and are offered by specialized agencies in an institutional setting (community colleges and educational institutions) or in the workplace (employers or unions).

Specialized skills in “parenting” or parenting skills are meant to ensure the harmonious development of children who are able to function well in a given society;

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6 These skills include a sense of organization, a sense of responsibility, ability to work under pressure, thoroughness, a sense of observation, ability to adapt, ability to resolve problems, etc. Many literacy programs already focus on the recognition and development of these types of skills.

7 The term “generic” is the opposite of “specific.” The expression “specific skills” is generally used to designate skills that are not easily transferred because they are closely associated to a specific function (ICÉA, 1995, p. 21).

8 “Parental functions and required skills vary depending on the society and social groups. People may define what they feel are important functions, but it is society and the environment that will show them what they deem to be acceptable” (Côté, 2000; free translation).
they are based on the exercise of specific behavioural and relational abilities, attitudes, values and beliefs. They are generally associated with parental functions, but are not commonly recognized as literacy skills as such.

Although parenting skills do not fall directly within the scope of literacy programs, they still represent an interesting complement to literacy skills. Indeed, although they are not usually associated with the direct development of literacy skills, parenting skills can be very relevant by helping learners with low literacy skills find meaning in their training and fulfill their social roles. To develop this group of skills, it would be interesting to find partners that do not offer literacy services as such, but that usually offer educational services specific to certain needs of learners with low literacy skills. Think about the providers of vocational training programs (colleges or educational institutions in some provinces) or of “parental role or parenting” programs (community organizations or social services in some provinces). In this respect, an approach based on skills integration is designed to ensure that learners with low literacy skills can develop their vocational or parental skills while simultaneously pursuing the development of literacy skills.

III - Strategies or abilities to support learning and integration

In our opinion, there are other learning abilities or strategies prone to supporting the development of the various types of skills presented above. In a more formal learning environment, we could talk, for example, about academic strategies or abilities (summarize a text in writing, read and understand instructions, take written tests, write an essay, etc.), that is to say, learning strategies that would allow learners to function better in programs where they are seeking a diploma or a certificate in secondary and post-secondary institutions. Other technological strategies or abilities, needed to use software, tap into the resources on the Internet and undertake distance training, also help support learners in their learning. Although these abilities are often included indistinguishably in the full range of literacy skills within a more traditional teaching context, they are however distinct from essential skills; they can be developed on the basis of variable geometry according to the nature of the training project. Note also various employability strategies or abilities (preparing a résumé, preparing for a job interview, creating a portfolio, etc.) that can be incorporated into a training project aimed at integrating the labour market.

2.3.2 Linking the development of literacy skills to the development of other types of skills in order to construct an andragogical intervention

When constructing an andragogical intervention that attempts to meet the needs of adults with low literacy skills, the community and the partners, the proposed integrated training approach provides for a two-tier integration.

The first level of integration occurs at the teaching-model level whereby the development of many types of skills is conceived in an integrated manner within a single intervention in response to the analysis of the needs of adults with low literacy skills. At this level of integration, the practitioners question which skills the intervention hopes to develop in the targeted adults with regard to their needs. That said, what place will essential skills, generic skills, second-language skills (English as the language of integration) or specialized skills occupy in order to meet the integration, communication and interaction needs in the various personal and professional projects of targeted adults?

The second level of integration occurs at the partnership level, where adult training services can be pooled and offered simultaneously in an integrated manner. Within such an approach, these services integrate the phases of training that are normally offered in a separate and linear fashion, thereby allowing learners with low literacy skills to undertake the development of skills specific to social or professional roles, while also pursuing the development of literacy skills (essential, generic, and language skills). Learners therefore have access to programs developing parental, vocational or other skills, which they would have had difficulty accessing at this stage in their development of literacy skills. At this level of integration, practitioners question which programs or services must be incorporated in order for the intervention to ensure the development of identified skills with regard to the needs of targeted adults. How can we link, in one single intervention, the programs and services that will allow for the development of appropriate literacy skills and specialized skills? In this context, the joint inter-program approach makes it easier to integrate learners with low literacy skills within training projects that will better respond to their needs and realities.

As opposed to a more linear and traditional training pathway where the learner terminates his or her literacy training before starting another training program, and so on.
2.4 Fourth component: Feedback and reassessment of actions taken within the context of the model

Despite all the goodwill on the part of local adult education partners to create initiatives based on the literacy development model and its integrated approach to services, the biggest challenge for adult learners and the adult education networks will continue to be adjusting to socio-economic changes caused by situations over which local practitioners have little control, but which may however significantly influence both their ability to take action and the lives of adult learners.

During economic cycles, as with social and political movements, there will always be periods where unemployment and job losses will be higher, and where the needs of adult learners will be significant, but where the short-term solutions will be more difficult to find. There will always be complex geographies that pose enormous challenges, large distances to cover, isolation of certain Francophone populations… There are no miracle solutions to all these challenges; we can only hope that the proposed model will make it easier to implement part of the answer.

2.4.1 Listening and observing carefully; taking an objective distance in order to assess, fine-tune and perfect actions

Once the partnering organizations have agreed on the nature of the andragogical intervention, it becomes important to see implementation as an active experiment, especially during the initial attempt. It therefore becomes important to listen carefully and to take an objective distance in order to assess and revaluate the actions as a means of ensuring the model is used properly.

After creating a mechanism for the continuous collection of information, the data that has been gathered (such as outcomes, comments and criticism from learners, practitioners and partners) should help readjust the activities and perfect the model, depending on the context. Everything must remain flexible and open to improvements. Some trial implementations will work well, others less so. There must be a dynamic of openness and of willingness to adapt to change among the partnering organizations involved, especially during the first stages of constructing the intervention.

2.4.2 A series of questions for the implementation, assessment and adjustment of an integrated intervention

Here we look at each of the elements in the four components of the proposed model and propose key questions for each, questions that we hope can guide practitioners in their thinking and during their trial implementations. In the third part of the document, you will also find an example of the approach implemented in Hawkesbury, Ontario\(^\text{10}\), and based on about 20 years of action research and practice on the ground.

First component: Analyzing the environment

Analyzing adults’ needs

- What is the literacy profile of community members?
- What are the needs of adults with low literacy skills in the community?
- How could I learn more about their needs (e.g.: a meeting with adults, focus group)?
- Are there specific needs of integration that warrant more attention (e.g.: integration into employment sectors, family support for a specific group, needs in relation to a basic knowledge of English, etc.)?
- What types of psychosocial obstacles are adults with low literacy skills in my community facing?
- What types of institutional obstacles are adults with low literacy skills in my community facing (e.g., transportation, child care, the presence or absence of programs in the community, recognition of prior learning by the community)?

Analyzing the socio-economic context

- What available employment sectors in the community are relevant to learners with low literacy skills?

\(^{10}\) This example allows us to look at a field experiment in the where we attempted to answer most of the key questions about implementing a literacy development model in the community.
- What are the relevant trades for learners and for the community?
- What accessible training programs (in terms of literacy levels) are likely to lead quickly to a job?
- Who are the important partners with whom we can discuss these questions (e.g., employment centre, community college or school board, community organization, elementary school in the case of a very small minority, etc.)?
- How can we explore the creation of new quality adult training programs that meet the socio-economic needs of a local community at an affordable price for the partners involved?

**Analyzing the cultural context**

- What is the local profile of the Francophone community?
- Are there integration projects that would be beneficial to those in the Francophone community with low literacy skills?
- Who are the key players in our community (school, library, bookstore, Francophone association, etc.)?
- What role does English play in our community?
- What measures need to be implemented locally to promote and improve the literacy of Francophones, and not just promote French-language literacy training?
- How do we take the linguistic dimension into account when delivering training programs?

**Analyzing local educational resources**

- What community and educational resources are available for adult learners who might be interested in the creation of adapted andragogical interventions?
- How are referrals between programs and between organizations currently being done?
- What is the history of collaboration between organizations?
- How can we maximize the use of existing resources in a given area in order to offer quality and affordable training to learners with low literacy skills?

**Second component:**

**Creating strategic local partnerships**

**Mobilizing the community’s resources**

- Who are the partners most likely to work with us?
- What is the partner’s prevailing ideology?
- What impact does this ideology have on its organizational culture and its ability to participate in partnerships?
- What is the partner’s vision of the partnership?
- What framework could we implement or use in order to boost collaboration?
- What partnerships are needed to develop integrated interventions and to promote them in the labour market?

**Developing a local adult education planning process**

- Are the jurisdictions of training programs well defined?
- Is there duplication or a continuum of services in adult training?
- How can we facilitate the planning of local adult training services, while respecting the jurisdictions and accountability requirements of everyone?
- Is there a need to harmonize the jurisdiction of the literacy program with that of other training programs?
- Is the literacy program as attractive as other training programs?
- If not, how can we enhance our interventions with adults with low literacy skills in order to make these programs more attractive?
- In this respect, are there strategic partnerships to be developed with certain natural partners in adult training (vocational training or educational training programs, employability services, etc.)?
- Are there strategic partnerships to be developed with certain natural referral partners (income support, employability services, compensation, etc.)?
Establishing a single entry point for adult training

- Is it necessary to create a forum for pooling resources (e.g., single entry point, joint committee for a specific initiative, round table, multiservice centre, etc.)?
- If yes, how does one convince partnering organizations to set up such a centralized system?
- If yes, what activities or services should be pooled together (e.g., intake, registration, assessment of literacy levels, identification of learner needs, and management of teaching/administrative files)?

Developing collaborative agreements and strategic partnerships in order to make andragogical interventions operational

- How can we mitigate the structural barriers that limit the participation of adults with lower literacy skills?
- How can we mitigate the psychosocial barriers that limit the participation of adults with lower literacy skills?
- How do we implement a joint program in which all partnering organizations will feel that success has been achieved on the following fronts: respecting administrative requirements; respecting jurisdictions; respecting intervention philosophies (training, insertion, etc.)?
- Can we define with all partnering organizations what forms of certification will be recognized for the new joint training program (e.g., college certificate; certification from a professional association or any other government agency, educational certification within the framework of obtaining a secondary-level diploma, etc.)?

Thoughts on developing literacy skills and other types of skills

- What are our thoughts on the literacy skills presented in section 2.3.1 of the document?
- What are the needs of adults with regard to these skills?
- What are the most important skills we want to develop in the new intervention, based on adults’ needs?
- What role do second-language skills play in meeting the integration, communication and interaction needs in the various personal and professional projects of targeted adults (Francophones in a minority situation, who must learn English as the language of integration)?

Linking the development of literacy skills to the development of other types of skills in order to construct an andragogical intervention

- How do we link, within a single intervention, the development of literacy skills and other skills?
- Can educational interventions be designed that will allow literacy skills to play a fundamental and strategic role in the acquisition and development of specialized skills?
Fourth component: Feedback and reassessment of actions

- Once it has been established, how is our collaborative process working?
- What are the contentious points, or the elements to be improved?
- How well are the partnering organizations communicating?
- How well is our referral or single entry point system working?
- What aspects require improvement?
- What was the outcome of our first integrated program?
- Are the adults satisfied? What would they like to improve?
- What are our success rates and drop-out rates?
- What improvements should be made to our second integrated project, if applicable?
Part 3

Reflective Practices by the CAP that Gave Rise to the FCAF’s Model

The FCAF would like to thank the Centre d’apprentissage et de perfectionnement inc. (CAP) for providing it with access to a great deal of its action research that led to the creation of the Referral Centre for Adult Training (RCAT) and the joint programs that became the Fast Track programs (TGVs). These two very important components were the main source of inspiration for designing a broader model adapted to different communities under the umbrella of the FCAF, which is found in Part 2 of this document.

In Part 3, we will attempt to illustrate the strategies and modalities explored by the Centre d’apprentissage et de perfectionnement (CAP) in order to cope with the difficulties in recruiting and training adults with low literacy skills in Prescott County, in Eastern Ontario. These strategies and modalities are the product of nearly 20 years of reflective practices and action research; among other things, they have evolved into integrated referral and training services for this adult clientele. Although the CAP had the chance to develop a single entry point and Fast Track programs through various action research projects, it completely integrated these two components into its operational structure. These components became, by extension, the models that fuelled the FCAF’s current exercise, because of their very well-documented implementation principles.

3.1 Illustration of the first component: Analyzing the environment

In the mid 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s, the Centre d’apprentissage et de perfectionnement (CAP) in Hawkesbury, Ontario, committed itself to developing various training projects that integrated diverse resources in the community. As the CAP team was able to observe over the course of its short history, it is not easy to reach people with low literacy skills through Ontario’s Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program.

3.1.1 Analyzing the needs of adult learners in Prescott County

After a few years of operation, the CAP’s practitioners realized rather quickly that the traditional recruitment strategies used in the field of adult literacy training could not easily circumvent the obstacles facing adults in the community, and more specifically those with low literacy skills.

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The CAP is a community organization that is mainly responsible for offering training services to adults with low literacy skills in the Hawkesbury area, in Eastern Ontario. It is an incorporated non-profit organization in existence since February 1988. It is the only Francophone service provider from Ontario’s Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program in the area of Prescott County. The CAP is a dynamic organization that has always been very active in community development and in the research and development of andragogical practises.
For many years, the CAP tried using every means possible to attract a clientele with low literacy skills into its programs in order to help these people, among other things, reintegrate the labour force in the short or medium term. The problem most often encountered, according to the CAP team, was the inability of training products offered by the LBS program to attract the desired clientele and referral agencies. The reality is that adults with low literacy skills—just like the other adults—want to obtain an educational, vocational or college certificate, which will be more relevant to the requirements of finding employment, as quickly as possible, and all within a realistic timetable (Dugas and Lurette, 2005).

In this context, endeavours by the LBS program remain largely unsuccessful. This situation is all the more dramatic given that the agencies likely to refer this clientele to the LBS program have the same reaction as the clientele itself, that is to say, to look more towards short-term training programs that culminate with some form or another of certification in order to orient their recipients towards a job as quickly as possible (Lurette, 2008, p. 18).

It therefore became critical for the CAP to rethink the services it provided in order to better respond to the integration needs of adults with low literacy skills in Prescott County.

In order to renew its strategic position in the field of adult education, the CAP slowly began changing the way it defined its services in the community. In its first few years, the CAP’s mandate was to offer literacy training to Francophone adults in Prescott County. Over the past fifteen years, the CAP redefined and expanded its mandate to also provide training to adults with low literacy skills. Its official name therefore changed from “Centre d’alphabétisation de Prescott” (Literacy Centre of Prescott Russell) to “Centre d’apprentissage et de perfectionnement” (Centre for Learning and Upgrading) in order to reflect its new direction. That said, its target clientele remained the same (namely adults at levels 1 and 2 of the IALS). However, the nature of its services were transformed and diversified in a significant manner, to focus on the needs of adults with low literacy skills within its territory to quickly find employment.

### 3.1.2 Analyzing the socio-economic context

In the early 1990s, the CAP practitioners identified the vast pool of employees from companies in the Hawkesbury region and surrounding area as a potential source of learners. Hawkesbury, a small industrial town located in a rural setting, has a significant number of people with low literacy skills working in the private sector. Since the 1980s, the town and the Prescott region have both suffered the consequences of economic change. Jobs in the pulp and paper, textile, and manufacturing industries gradually gave way to jobs in the services and specialized manufacturing fields. This transition forced many workers to look for new types of jobs, most of which required basic skills and specialized skills different from those developed previously during the course of their employment pathway. As a result, the workers in transition or those looking for work gradually became the CAP’s main target clientele throughout the 1990s and into 2000.

Furthermore, a significant number of this group are Franco-Ontarians, who are the majority in the region, but the vast minority in the province and who, as highlighted by Comeau (1996), show specific illiteracy characteristics typical of minorities, which would explain the higher ratio of illiteracy and under-education. As a result, the United Counties of Prescott and Russell, and more specifically Prescott County, are areas where the literacy level of the adult Francophone population is lower than the Canadian average (Garceau, 1998). One might think that the literacy and general training programs would therefore have a large pool of learners to serve. Yet, in this region as elsewhere, recruitment and retention of learners in Francophone training programs, and more specifically Francophone literacy training, remain very difficult. There is therefore a need to constantly innovate.

In its desire to better position itself in the field of adult training across its territory, the CAP tried to circumvent the chronic recruitment problems that it had been experiencing year after year. With growing pressure caused by the reform of Ontario’s Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program, the level of activities meant learner-contact hours should have reached all time highs12, but with essentially the same resources; it was no longer possible to maintain the service delivery context. It became increasingly clear that most of the potential learners would be adults looking for work, a so-called involuntary clientele that would choose retraining strictly out of necessity to find a job and that would pick qualifying training over

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12 In Ontario, in the LBS environment, the expression “learner contact hours” refers to hours wherein an adult learner directly receives a training, assessment or referral service by a LBS service. The Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) sets target numbers of learner contact hours that each service provider must reach in a fiscal year in order to guarantee that it maintains its level of basic funding.
literacy training. For the most part, this potential clientele would be referred to training services by the various income support programs (e.g.: Ontario Works, employment insurance, etc.).

3.1.3 Analyzing the structure of local educational services

By 1994, after having analyzed the recruitment statistics from previous years, the CAP practitioners realized that learners attending the CAP almost all came from the informal reference network, meaning they had been referred by learners who were already registered in programs, CAP employees, friends, etc. Very few learners had been referred by the more formal network, such as the various public service agencies and the other adult training programs. In short, adults with low literacy skills were not getting to the CAP through the formal reference structures. What is more, when they would go into other adult training services, most of these services were poorly adapted to their needs. On the one hand, lower literacy levels were not taken into account in these other programs; there was a tendency to integrate adults in terms of their educational profile, regardless of their literacy profile. On the other hand, the CAP had noticed there were considerable discrepancies between the need for adults with low literacy skills to find a job and the services offered by other programs. The prioritized training was more linear and academic, and was not really oriented toward the rapid acquisition of skills appropriate for the local jobs.

In the late 1990s, the CAP observed significant organizational changes in the educational resources of two important agencies in Prescott-Russell. This is when the Ontario Works program came into being at the Social Services Department of the United Counties of Prescott and Russell, and it was oriented more towards socio-professional reintegration. At the same time, the French-language Catholic school board and the Francophone and Anglophone public school boards serving the Prescott and Russell area decided to merge their adult education services, rather than continue competing with each other. This merger of adult-education service offerings greatly facilitated referral work in the field by significantly reducing the competition or tug-of-war between training centres. This restructuring and integration of local educational services would have a positive effect on the creation of strategic partnerships.

3.2 Illustration of the second component: Creating strategic local partnerships

3.2.1 Mobilizing the community’s educational resources

By 1994, the CAP had explored strategies to offer better services to a clientele with low literacy skills with little knowledge of its services, some of whom found themselves by default in other training or workplace integration programs that were often poorly adapted to their needs. From then on, the CAP worked to establish a local framework for consulting practitioners in adult training, including the CAP, the local community college La Cité Collégiale’s campus in Hawkesbury, the French-language public school board in Prescott-Russell, and the French-language Catholic school board in Prescott-Russell. The goal of this framework was to jointly offer training services to workers from five large companies in the region.

Since this initiative was so successful, the next logical step was to ensure that the entire community of Prescott-Russell could benefit from the joint offering of certain adult training services. To do so, the existing partnership agreements needed to be extended to other like-minded partners. Other partners that dealt with learners excluded from the labour market, namely Ontario Works in Prescott-Russell and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada in the Prescott-Russell area, were added to the first collaborative framework established for the workplace initiative. A bit later, the Employment Services Centre of Prescott-Russell and the EOETC, which consolidates the adult education services from the three school boards active in this field, both joined. What is more, given that the new framework was supposed to cover the western part of the counties, namely the county of Russell, other training practitioners wanted to participate in the collaborative framework: the literacy centre Moi j’apprends in Russell County, the Alfred Campus of the University of Guelph, the T.R. Léger School for adults, which provides literacy services for Anglophones, and the Valor Institute. Other social partners also joined, namely Prescott-Russell Services to Children and Adults, the Ontario Disability Support Program, and the Prescott-Russell Community Development Corporation.
32.2 Establishing a single entry point for adult training

Centralizing resources in order to establish a joint reference, assessment and referral service

In the mid 1990s, the CAP worked to set up, together with its partners, a local framework of community collaboration: the Referral Centre for Adult Training in Prescott-Russell (RCAT), which has turned into a pillar in the development of services for adults with low literacy skills in the region. The CAP created the RCAT and acts as the manager with the agreement of all its partners (consult the table on page 35).

Work began on a local collaborative framework for adult training in 1993; this framework gradually became a local and permanent single entry point framework in 1997. (Consult section 3.2.4 for more information on the cooperative agreements that led to the creation of the RCAT.) Over the years, the RCAT gradually and naturally developed different functions for the adult training network in Prescott-Russell.

The RCAT is the central point of a complex reference, assessment and referral system, to which several partners are associated. The partners are divided into three categories, namely training agencies, referral agencies, and advisory-type agencies. This structure combines, amongst others, all the adult training programs in the region, including the French- and English-language LBS programs, all the French and English programs offered by the school boards, all the services offered by colleges in the region, as well as all the learner support services (employment support and income maintenance). In this system, all agencies may refer adult learners to the RCAT, even though the vast majority of referred learners come from referral agencies, and more specifically from the Ontario Works program and the Employment Services Centre of Prescott-Russell.

The RCAT offers initial assessment and referral services to all learners referred to it using a common reference, assessment and referral protocol. In this way, learners all follow the same assessment procedures before being referred to the appropriate program based on a training plan that takes into account various elements, including their literacy level, their education level, their needs and their preferences, as well as the administrative requirements of their referral agency. In this system, the agencies systematically refer adult learners to the RCAT’s services.

From there, diverse activities are then carried out by the RCAT’s various partners. The agencies responsible for literacy services provide the skills assessment services, since this function is part of their mandate, and they develop the return to training plans for clients. The consortium of school boards (EOETC) is responsible for assessing prior learning achievements. All partnering organizations contribute to the development of tools, tests, and procedures by participating on working committees. The CAP is responsible for the overall coordination of the RCAT (convening meetings, managing working committees, producing documents and tools, etc.), which it finances using internal resources or project funds.
The RCAT: Organizational chart of the single entry point for adult training in Prescott-Russell

Training agencies
- CAP
- EOETC
- Alfred Campus of the U of G
- La Cité collégiale
- Moi j’apprends in Russell County
- T.R. Léger
- Valor Institute

Referral agencies
- Employment Services Centre
- Ontario Works
- PRSCA
- WSIB
- ODSP
- Joint advertising

Advisory-type agencies
- Eastern Ontario Training Board
- Community Development Corporation
- HRSDC

Referral Centre for Adult Training (RCAT)

Assessment → Referral → Data analysis → Program development → Joint advertising

Development of instructional content → Coordination of joint programs

Programs for a specific clientele
(CAP, Alfred Campus of the U of G and EOETC)
- CAP

Programs that lead to an OSSD
(CAP, EOETC and Moi j’apprends)
- Skills-Plus
- Accredited training and basic training

Work force insertion programs: Fast Track programs
(CAP, EOETC, La Cité collégiale and Alfred Campus of the U of G)
- Landscaping and Horticultural Techniques (OYAP)
- Food Services Assistant or Assistant Cook certificate (OYAP)
- Sales Clerk certificate
- Personal Support Worker certificate
- Industrial Mechanic Millwright (OYAP)
- Learning and Teaching Assistant certificate
- Office Automation and Bookkeeping Clerk certificate
- Other programs under development

Taken from Dugas, D., Bilan annuel de la direction, Centre d’apprentissage et de perfectionnement inc., 2002, p. 4.
Centralizing resources in order to implement joint awareness and recruitment strategies for adult learners

During the 2000s, the support partnerships of the RCAT in Prescott-Russell matured; the partnering organizations reached a higher level of mutual trust. As a result, the RCAT became a forum for implementing joint communication, awareness, promotion and recruitment strategies for adult learners in the Prescott-Russell area.

Consequently, the CAP supports and finances the development of a website for the RCAT using the logistical support of partners. This website has become the common area for accessing information on adult training activities across the entire region. The public can consult it freely at any time. The site is particularly useful for keeping practitioners in all the agencies and organizations up to date on training initiatives in the region, and for giving them access to certain reference tools.

During the same period, the RCAT’s training partners decided to develop joint advertising and recruitment tools. These paper brochures describe the entire range of adult training programs and services, in addition to referring anyone looking for more information or to register for the services being offered to the RCAT (its offices and website). The joint advertising brochures are distributed twice a year, at strategic “return-to-training” moments for adults in Prescott-Russell.

The RCAT’s training organizations finance the production and distribution of the brochures using a cost-sharing system that was developed through negotiation and consensus. All partnering organizations contribute to the development of the website and the brochures by participating on working committees. The CAP is responsible for coordinating updates of the brochures and the website, which it finances using internal resources or project funds.

In addition to the centralization of formal referrals from partner agencies, joint awareness and recruitment strategies help to further centralize all the recruitment and registration activities. It therefore becomes easier to effectively coordinate the training activities that are likely to function well (avoid duplication, focus resources) by pairing up the clientele that comes from formal RCAT referrals with the clientele being generated by awareness and recruitment activities on the website and in joint advertising brochures.

Pooling resources to help coordinate strategic partnerships for the design and delivery of joint training interventions

With the creation of a single entry point for adult training, everything was in place to facilitate the development of joint, integrated training services for adults in Prescott-Russell, and more specifically adults with complex and multiple needs like people with low literacy skills with little education. After creating the RCAT, it was important for the CAP, through the RCAT and with its partners, to develop novel and realistic approaches to forging “organic” links between adult training (and income support) programs on the one hand and the needs of unemployed adult learners in the community on the other. This is why the CAP undertook the development of various integrated training projects that make use of the public resources in its community.

(Consult section 3.3 for more information on the joint, integrated interventions that are a natural extension of the RCAT’s activities.)

3.2.3 Developing a local adult education planning process

Over the years, the RCAT also took upon itself the task of analyzing diverse local data on the training needs of adults in its area: the source of learners using its services, the results of assessments carried out over the years (literacy and education profiles), the profiles of learner needs, and the modes of operation of the partners’ various programs. These analyses help the RCAT carry out regular local planning in order to offer adult training in its territory. This local planning exercise can result in the creation of new joint training programs for which the RCAT ensures the establishment of a joint program coordination committee, another function that has developed naturally over the years.

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13 Where joint program coordination committees exist, the coordination is then undertaken by a training organization. The RCAT acts essentially as a catalyst and enabler in the creation of the integrated training program offered jointly by its partners.
3.2.4 Developing collaborative agreements and strategic partnerships in order to make andragogical interventions operational

By 1994, the CAP’s practitioners had developed, in partnership with other training organizations in the region, a referral protocol for adult learners. This protocol was essentially based on a literacy screening test, which would be used as a key tool during the first joint workplace initiative.

Since the partnership was expanding to ensure a more global community intervention, a first-language classification test and a high school mathematics classification test were added to the literacy screening test. The new test provided a more comprehensive and flexible work tool to support the referral system set up following the official agreement in 1996. This referral mechanism was signed by five adult training centres in the region: the CAP, the Moi, j’apprends literacy centre in Russell, the Prescott and Russell County Roman Catholic French-Language Separate School Board, the Prescott-Russell County Board of Education and the La Cité Collégiale community college. By 1996, the agreement in question formed the foundation of what would become the Referral Centre for Adult Training (RCAT) in Prescott-Russell the following year.

However, the referral mechanism did not roll out in the field as intended, which diminished the results of several years of work. While the more conservative scenario was retained when the agreement was signed in 1996, this was done mainly for political reasons. At that time, the partners were not ready to relinquish responsibility to anyone else for the assessment or referral of future learners (possibly towards another training program). One explanation might be that the organizational cultures of the partners at the time did not allow for the operationalization of a partnership that required a certain amount of mutual trust and that was focused on the needs of learners rather than the needs of programs.

A solid foundation had nevertheless been laid: the assessment tools and a partnership agreement between the training centres were in place. The only work that remained to be done was to refine the mechanism between the organizations, and above all, to develop trust between the partners in a new spirit of partnership. In this respect, the increasing trust between partners and the success of agreements led quickly to the establishment of a new service in the autumn of 1997. The Referral Centre for Adult Training (the Prescott-Russell RCAT) became part of a wide range of changes taking place at the time. This growing trust between the partners led, in the 2000s, to the development of new agreements to support the creation of joint awareness and recruitment activities (creation of a website and joint advertising brochures) and the establishment of joint, integrated programs for adults with low literacy skills. (Consult section 3.3 for more information on the joint, integrated interventions that are natural extensions of the agreements between the RCAT’s partners.)

3.3 Illustration of the third component: Constructing an andragogical intervention adapted to the needs of learners, the community and the partners

3.3.1 Various CAP projects to establish integrated andragogical interventions in its community

First project:
A unique single entry point approach in companies

The CAP’s first attempt to create a strategic partnership for offering integrated training services to adults locally came in the form of the “Upgrading in the Workplace” project. This project was carried out in the mid 1990s with companies and partners in the Hawkesbury area, in Eastern Ontario. The project’s goal was to meet the workers directly in their workplace and to have one single person (a liaison officer) promote the full range of adult training services in the region. The project also left the door open to the creation of new training services better adapted to the needs of workers and their circumstances. The integration involved mainly service planning activities and the recruitment of learning workers. The basic idea was to include all the adult training programs in one single service offering that would be coordinated by the liaison officer representing all the partners. This single-entry-point approach brought down psychosocial and institutional barriers; it brought learners from the workplace to the training program that had not made it there through a traditional approach.

The project was very successful in a relatively short amount of time. Within a few weeks, after only one tour of offering services, nearly 250 workers were recruited in five companies to participate in existing training programs, or in programs created for them. In total, 51 workers showed an interest in obtaining an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD). Approximately 20% of them were referred to a literacy program, according to their basic skills measured using the assessment and referral protocol. Others were referred to the School for adults in order to complete their high school education. The workers who demonstrated an interest in undertaking more
Towards an Integrated Model to Support the Literacy Development of Francophones in Canada

general studies, especially to obtain an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), were gradually integrated into the appropriate training centres. In addition, five groups of workers from the different companies were able to register in four courses of interest: French as a second language, English as a second language, Windows 95, and basic computer skills.

In total, 201 workers were able to benefit from these courses, which would have been very difficult, even impossible, for them without this project, because of their working schedules.

Second project: A single entry point approach in the community

Following the “Upgrading in the Workplace” project, the creation of RCAT was another critical step in the reorganization and integration of adult recruitment, assessment, and referral services in the United Counties of Prescott and Russell. The RCAT constituted an extension of the “Upgrading in the Workplace” project. (Consult section 3.2.2 for details on how the RCAT functions.) The centre achieved interesting results in its initial years of operation.

However, this crucial step was not enough to retain the clientele with low literacy skills being screened by the RCAT in the CAP’s services. As with the workplace initiative, it was not enough to simply identify the adults with low literacy skills; we needed to be able to offer them training that met their socio-professional needs while taking into account their literacy levels. The CAP attempted therefore to set up different joint, integrated programs with local partners in order to meet the very specific needs of its target clientele, while also respecting all the parameters of departmental funders and partners that deliver training services.

Third project: The creation of TGVs (Fast Track programs)

The need to better respond to the needs of adults with low literacy skills led to the creation of joint programs which, in turn, resulted in the creation of Fast Track programs, which were then renamed the “TGVs of training” (Très grande vitesse). These programs focus on expanding employment sectors in which learners with low literacy skills are capable of working without necessarily having reached level 3 (of the IALSS) for the entire range of literacy skills. The CAP’s Fast Track programs are short-term training programs (20 to 30 intensive weeks) that allow unemployed learners with low literacy skills to undertake or pursue training that integrates both:

- qualifying or technical training that is recognized by the workplace;
- training that focuses on the development of strategically targeted literacy skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of activity/RCAT</th>
<th>Number of adult learners referred to the RCAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997-1998</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-1999</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-2000</td>
<td>313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001</td>
<td>222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-2002</td>
<td>275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-2003</td>
<td>350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-2004</td>
<td>720*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-2005</td>
<td>870*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-2006</td>
<td>598*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-2007</td>
<td>321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-2009</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Peak references reached with the addition of joint publicity and Web site.

14 For workers identified as having the need for literacy training, the CAP already had a program with a schedule adapted to their work shifts. For the training aimed at obtaining an OSSD, the Adult Education program provided a teacher one evening each week. Most of the workers did their studying and work at home, but they could go to school during that one evening to consult the designated teacher.

15 The majority of adults referred to the RCAT placed below level 3 of the IALSS, as might be expected, since they were for the most part unemployed clients. We do not, however, have any specific statistics to demonstrate this statement.
3.3.2 A typical example and the CAP’s first Fast Track program: the Food Services Assistant certificate

In the early 2000s, the CAP and the Alfred Campus of the University of Guelph initiated a partnership in order to broaden the client base of adult learners to be trained for the food services sector, an industry that had been growing in the region for a number of years. The goal of this partnership was to offer an industry-recognized certification to an unemployed clientele in order to support the integration of these people into the institutional kitchens of health care facilities. The CAP next invited the Hawkesbury Campus of the Eastern Ontario Education and Training Centre to join the partnership in order to integrate the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) component. We then worked on building the financial and educational structures needed to create an initial link between the CAP’s basic training program, the college-level or professional studies on Alfred Campus, and the EOETC’s secondary-level studies for adults with low literacy skills.

3.3.2.1 The context of the partnership

The first Food Services Assistant certificate was developed by Collège d’Alfred, in partnership with Collège Boréal in Sudbury, in the late 1990s. The goal of this certificate was to provide technical and theoretical training to employees in the food services sector; its first delivery would be in the form of continuing training for workers already working in institutional kitchens (hospitals, long-term care centres, seniors’ residences). In fact, it was expected that in 2001 the Ministry of Health would require that 50% of the workforce in these types of facilities receive the required certification in food services.

In the early 2000s, the certificate was being offered within the context of a partnership agreement between the CAP, the EOETC and the Alfred Campus of the University of Guelph. Under this agreement, the partners agreed to share certain infrastructures and human resources to deliver the joint vocational training program in order to reach a clientele that was unemployed, seeking socio-professional integration and often receiving public benefits, and to meet the needs of this clientele. The partners took into account the fact that there was a small pool of adults looking for work in the targeted professional fields; the target clientele for these trade proficiency certificates were in some cases under-educated, often with low literacy skills, and often had a difficult relationship with the formal and academic learning contexts. The partners therefore decided to bring together each others’ strengths, resources, expertise and jurisdictions in order to propose educational projects that were adapted, relevant, and effective to the targeted clientele and the local employment context.

3.3.2.2 Identifying the literacy skills and specific skills to be developed

The original Food Services Assistant certificate required 180 hours of vocational training and 30 hours of on-the-job training. It focused on the development of technical skills specific to the targeted sector of activity: food services assistant in the kitchens of hospitals and senior citizen care facilities. From the start, the certificate was to be offered as an intensive course in the form of continued education, based on the availability of the recruited workers, and in a more conventional format (theoretical and laboratory courses with no specific adaptations).

The version of the certificate offered in partnership and in Fast Track format was adapted to an adult clientele with low literacy skills (at the top of level 1 and in level 2 of the IALSS) that had no experience in this field of activity. In this respect, the first level of adaptation was based on a comprehensive identification of the skills types that the program needed to develop, taking into account the target clientele and the nature of the occupation. In this level of adaptation, the practitioners (program coordinators and trainer) contemplated what skills to develop in the targeted adults with regard to their needs when the time came to find a job as a food services assistant. What role do essential skills, generic skills, second-language skills (English as the language of integration) or specialized skills play in meeting the integration needs of the targeted professional field? Furthermore, in identifying what skills needed to be developed, we had to remember that the training would need to follow a realistic timeline to facilitate the workplace integration process (20 to 30 intensive weeks).

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16 A consortium that consolidates the adult education services of three school boards in the Prescott-Russell area.
17 By 2007, the Ontario Ministry of Health declared that all new employees joining institutional kitchens in the health system would need the appropriate food services certification, including the Alfred Campus certificate.
18 The use of the female gender here and in the following text reflects the fact that the vast majority of learners were women.
19 The same observation applies in the case of training personnel.
After initial deliberations, the program designers and the initial trainers proposed that the following skill profile be developed:

I- Literacy-related skills
The literacy-related skills that were targeted in the training project were prioritized according to the nature of the occupation's duties (food services assistant in health care institutions). In addition to preparing the learners for their integration into the workplace, these skills would help strategically support, during the training period, the development of technical or vocational skills that are recognized by the food services industry.

Essential skills
Specific attention was paid to the essential skills of "reading texts" and "document use," because the nature of the work involves using written documents (recipes, instructions, manuals, etc.). Little emphasis was put on the more traditional essential skills, such as numeracy and writing, given their limited use in the duties of this occupation. However, the importance of verbal communication skills and working with others was stressed, because the organization of work in an institutional kitchen requires a great deal of collaboration and cohesion. A digital technology component (introduction) was included in order to introduce or pursue (for some learners) the development of this skill that has become essential in the labour market.

Generic skills
Some generic skills were quickly regarded as important skills to develop, because of the nature of the occupation. For example: organizational skills, ability to carry out repetitive tasks, sense of responsibility, thoroughness, ability to work under pressure, team spirit. Since these skills were strongly linked to action, they were systematically integrated into the learning objectives of the different laboratories and the on-the-job training. They were also addressed in courses related to workplace communication, and more specifically, employability development activities.

Second-language skills
This type of interactional skill was not addressed in a systematic fashion, because the position of food services assistant does not require interpersonal contact with a Francophone or Anglophone public. However, certain elements of English as the language of written communication (certain technical documents related to work) were integrated strategically and in an ad hoc manner to reflect the reality of this business sector in Ontario.

II- Skills specific to professional roles
The technical and vocational techniques to be developed were identified from two sources of information: 1) the content of the initial 210-hour certificate (safe food handling, food preparation and equipment, understanding and applying knowledge on nutrition, management of food services, etc.); and 2) the vocational knowledge of trainers and the program coordination for Alfred Campus.

III- Strategies or abilities to support learning and integration
Specific attention was paid to employability strategies or abilities (preparing a résumé, preparing for a job interview, creating a portfolio, etc.) in order to facilitate job integration of participants from the training project.

3.3.2.3 Linking the development of diverse skills types in order to construct an andragogical intervention that fulfills needs
Once the profile of skills needed to become a Food Services Assistant and to integrate that field of work was identified, the challenge consisted of constructing a didactic model whereby the development of multiple types of skills occurred in an integrated fashion, in one single educational intervention, and in relation to the needs of the targeted adults with low literacy skills and the nature of the occupation. The pursuit of this didactic model involves a second level of integration: the establishment of strategic partnerships to ensure appropriate services are shared and offered in a simultaneous and integrated manner. As a result, this approach proposed that learners develop skills specific to the professional role of Food Services Assistant while simultaneously pursuing the development of literacy skills (essential, generic and language skills). At this second level of integration, the practitioners contemplated which programs and services to integrate so that the intervention would allow for the development of the previously identified skills. How could these programs and services be integrated into a single intervention so they would allow for the simultaneous development of all the targeted skills?

Designing training delivery
As already mentioned, the original certificate of Food Services Assistant required 180 hours of theoretical training and 30 hours of on-the-job training; it targeted adults already working in this sector of activity. The certificate, which was offered in partnership, was adapted to an adult clientele with low literacy skills and no work experience.
Towards an Integrated Model to Support the Literacy Development of Francophones in Canada

The vocational component was spread out over 330 hours (150 hours were added to the original certificate) and 198 hours of general training were added to develop literacy skills and support the vocational component. Lastly, the on-the-job training was extended to 105 hours. The first Fast Track program to train food services assistants included therefore 22 weeks of theoretical and practical training, in the classroom and laboratory, and 3 weeks of on-the-job training. The classroom and laboratory training was spread over 4 days/week, for a total of 24 hours/week. The training was divided as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Hours/week</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocational component</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Introduction to food services, Safety and</td>
<td>15 hours/week X 22 weeks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>security, Food preparation and equipment,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nutrition, Managing food services,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laboratories, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic training component</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Written communication and computer technology, Employment support, Preparation for on-the-job training, Verbal communication)</td>
<td>9 hours/week X 22 weeks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total of training hours</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-the-job training</td>
<td></td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total of learning hours</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>633</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Nature of the partnership and partner contributions**

**Responsibility for delivery**

An initial training service component was identified to target the development of basic skills or literacy skills. This component represented 40% of the entire training package (200 hours in total). It was supported by Ontario’s Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) Program offered by the CAP and, in part, by the secondary level accredited training program offered by the EOETC. A second training service component focused on the development of specialized skills (vocational and technical) for a total of 60% of the training package (330 hours in total). This component was offered by the Alfred Campus of the University of Guelph and, in part, by the EOETC.

**Forms of certification and recognition**

This Fast Track training program was of a short duration (25 intensive weeks); this allowed unemployed learners with low literacy skills to undertake or pursue training, which integrated both:

- Training that focused on the development of targeted literacy skills;
- Qualifying or vocational training recognized by the workplace.

Upon graduation, the learner received a college certificate as a Food Services Assistant from the Alfred Campus of the University of Guelph. The certificate was recognized by the Ontario Ministry of Health and the Ontario Long-
Term Care Association. Alfred Campus recognized all of the 528 hours spent in the classroom and the 105 hours of on-the-job training. It awarded 1.5 credits to learners who completed the training and who wanted to continue their studies with a view to obtaining a post-secondary diploma in nutrition and food safety. The graduating learner also earned a package of secondary credits from the EOETC. The EOETC recognized the entire vocational training package and the on-the-job training of 105 hours. It could also recognize the basic training retroactively (recognition of prior learning) if a graduating learner so requested it. A learner could receive secondary credits for the classroom training and the on-the-job training in the form of cooperative education.

**Program coordination**

A steering committee consisting of representatives from the three training partners was responsible for the planning and broad guidelines of the Fast Track program. Logistical coordination was assumed by the CAP, through the intermediary of a partnership program coordinator. This coordinator convened the committee meetings, prepared the committee minutes and agendas, coordinated learner registration and recruitment, coordinated the links between each of the partners, and prepared schedules, deadlines or any other official program documents. However, the partner coordinator from the EOETC coordinated the entire gamut of on-the-job training.

**Other partner contributions**

The Alfred Campus of the University of Guelph provided a great deal of the infrastructure for the Fast Track training program. This infrastructure included a classroom and an institutional kitchen laboratory. The EOETC provided a computer laboratory and was responsible for its maintenance and regular upkeep. The CAP coordinated a transit system (minibus) for transporting the learners from the Hawkesbury sector to the Alfred Campus. The Ontario Works program from Prescott-Russell paid for some of the laboratory costs. The CAP, through the LBS program, offered the learners all the training support services provided for in the program (LBS assessment and classification, training assistance, training plans, etc.). Each partner contributed jointly and individually to the promotion of the Fast Track program.

**Responsibility for developing the instructional content**

The Alfred Campus of the University of Guelph provided the instructional content recognized by the Ministry of Health for the Food Services Assistant certificate. The EOETC updated and adapted the content. The CAP financed and coordinated the development of instructional content or the general training component.

### 3.3.3 Spin-offs from the first strategic partnership

As a result of the success of the Food Services Assistant program—both for the learners and the partnering organizations—other integrated Fast Track programs were then developed. In the table below, we provide a list of some integrated programs that the CAP and its partners have developed over the years. We have categorized the Fast Track programs according to the nature of the partnership agreements and the extent of the levels of partnership.

The programs are presented according to the different levels of integration between the programs and services, as well as between the LBS programs (literacy and basic training) and the partnering organizations’ training programs. We identify each type of program as “a level of integrated service.” As a result, the LBS programs, the accredited secondary-level training (OSSD), the college-level vocational training, and the custom training, represent respectively a level of integration. For example: “doubled” includes an LBS component + specialized training; “tripled” includes an LBS component + accredited academic training + local vocational training; and “quadrupled” includes an LBS component + accredited training + local vocational training + provincial certification for the learning program. A joint program may have partnership agreements with two to four levels of program or training services integration at their core. We must also mention that separate partnership agreements are negotiated with other agencies offering support services to learners (transportation, child care, study grants, etc.).
Throughout this entire process of offering integrated services, literacy training is considered to be the foundation—the essential element on which all the rest of the training process is based and built. The literacy and basic training intervention supports and is offered simultaneously to the other training services. It is not a separate step in preparation for the other programs or training pathways (as in a linear approach). This integrated approach identifies the literacy and basic training intervention as a more concise intervention in terms of training time, but more global in terms of a planned educational intervention (CAP, taken from Lurette and Dugas, 2003).

20 The Eastern Ontario Education and Training Centre is composed of a local consortium that includes the adult education services of three school boards. This partner mainly offers the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) to the adult clientele.
3.4 Illustration of the fourth component: Feedback and reassessment of actions

3.4.1 Listening and observing carefully; taking an objective distance in order to assess, fine-tune and perfect actions

Over the years, the CAP and its partners were able to adjust the nature of the collaborations and the andragogical interventions within the context of these joint initiatives of integrated services for adults with low literacy skills. The continuous collection of information and data (such as outcomes, comments, and criticisms from the learners, the practitioners and the partnering organizations) helped to adjust certain activities and to improve the partnerships.

3.4.1.1 Looking back at various CAP projects to implement integrated andragogical interventions in the community

First project:
A unique single entry point approach in companies

Within the context of the “Upgrading in the Workplace” project, it quickly became clear to the CAP practitioners that a coordinated offering of services for the full range of adult training programs was a very effective way of introducing training, particularly with the less educated and workers with low literacy skills in the manufacturing industries. However, the initiative only took place once. It would seem the partnerships were not solid enough at the time. In fact, the CAP had designed the interventions and it supported the coordination of interventions inside the businesses, as well as the assessment and referral services for recruited workers. The other training partners received learners in their programs. They did not make any additional effort to integrate the training services as such, and to adapt them to the needs; the integration therefore was limited to only the information services and the recruitment. When the grant to finance the liaison officer’s work ended, so too did the initiative. The project partners were undoubtedly not yet convinced about the relevance of integrated and adapted approaches at the time. However, the approach had been tested in the field and the seeds of the idea had been sown in the community.

Second project:
A single entry point approach in the community

The implementation of the single entry point (RCAT) was a long process of negotiations and adjustments. There was, for example, the addition of new assessment tools at critical moments in order to expand the target clientele or to refine the learner assessment and data collection processes. Other measures included the addition of certain partners that offered adults related employment support and income maintenance services. In addition, new training partners from Russell County helped to increase the RCAT’s field of action to the regional level, thereby making the implementation of the single entry point more legitimate on the administrative and political levels. In the 2000s, increased trust between the partners led to new activities, such as the implementation of joint awareness and recruitment activities (creation of a website, development of joint advertising brochures); it also led to the adjustment of a local service offering for people with low literacy skills (implementation of joint, integrated programs for this clientele, namely the Fast Track programs).

Third project:
The creation of Fast Track programs

The development of the strategic partnerships needed for the creation of Fast Track training programs and the didactic models that give shape to these programs required much discussion and many negotiations between the CAP’s practitioners and the partnering organizations. Regular program management, particularly during the first service offering, demands continuous evaluations of the various components of the Fast Track program, and that any emerging problematic situations be addressed as needed.

Consider this example: how does one establish passing levels for learners that will satisfy all partnering organizations? Ontario’s community colleges’ passing criteria based mostly on summative academic performance (a passing note at the end of the course). The school environment has passing criteria based in part on summative and formative academic performance (marks received during the course and at the end) and in part on the production of lessons linked to school credits. As for the CAP, its’ passing criteria is based in part on the learner’s ability to integrate the targeted employment sector (employability criteria) and in part on his or her commitment to the program (training participation criteria). Similarly, when do we need to pull a learner out of the Fast Track program? When he or she fails one assessment activity or when he or she has difficulty participating in the program? All these crucial questions and many others were evaluated and discussed, and adjustments were made all throughout implementation and ongoing management of the Fast Track programs.
3.4.1.2 Looking back at the typical example and the CAP’s first Fast Track program: the Food Services Assistant certificate

What was the outcome of the first integrated Fast Track program offered by the CAP and its partners? Were the adults satisfied? What did they want to improve in the program?

Significant modifications were made to the Food Services Assistant Fast Track the second time it ran, as a result of evaluations carried out with the first cohort of learners.

First of all, the writing workshops and modular courses were eliminated in order to incorporate the development of targeted skills into certain other courses (food services and communication), because their format was preferred. Because of this incorporation, we avoid making a too obvious distinction between the vocational training component and the basic training component, where the latter may be perceived as less important and optional, because it was integrated to a lesser degree into the development of specialized food services skills.

We also eliminated the English as a second-language course, because there was too much heterogeneity in the group of learners. Rather, we incorporated elements of functional English learning in the specialized food services courses.

Here are the quantitative results for the food services assistant program:

- Number of years the program was offered: 11 years (from 2000 to 2011)
- Number of adults who took the training course: 86 people divided into 9 separate cohorts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Results from the first eight cohorts</th>
<th>2000-2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Delivery period for the Fast Track program</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of cohorts</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of registered learners</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number that completed the program</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number that abandoned the program or were pulled out</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number that found a job within three months of having completed the program</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number that continued their training after the program</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number that confirmed being unemployed three months after having completed the program</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In reading over this very brief summary table above, we can see that 70% of the women who registered during this period completed their program. Of these women, 72% had a job in the field within three months of finishing the program.

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Most drop-outs occurred during the first few days of training, when the learners realized that this field of work was not for them. A smaller number dropped out or needed to be pulled out after several weeks of participation. These statistics were not available when this document was being written.

Among those graduates who had not found work within three months, some had decided to continue their studies the following year (complete their OSSD or a new vocational training) and had therefore decided to not actively seek work. As a result, it would be worthwhile to do a further analysis of the CAP’s Fast Track program participation statistics, and particularly a longitudinal follow-up study on graduates.
Important changes after 10 years of delivering the course

After having offered the Food Services Assistant program for almost 10 years, the CAP and its partners decided to make some significant changes. To this end, they have added the Cook - Level 1 (or Assistant Cook) component in order to increase employment opportunities in other sectors of activity in food services (restaurants, hotels, etc.) for the learners. Furthermore, this change helped to avoid saturating the local employment market for food services assistants in health care institutions. The program has therefore become the Food Services Assistant and Cook - Level 1 certificate.

In this new certificate with its dual recognition, the vocational training component linked to an apprenticeable trade in Ontario (Cook - Level 1 component) added a fourth level of integration (quadrupled). With this component, learners who graduate from this new Fast Track receive:

- recognition by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities as an apprentice in the Cook trade regulated under the Apprenticeship and Certification Act. In this trade, people must complete 6,000 hours of practical training as an apprentice in the workplace and then a second phase of theoretical training. After Level 1, the apprentice can then integrate into the labour market as an apprentice in the Cook trade, with a view to eventually receiving his or her certification once all the requirements have been met23.
- a college-level certification (transcript after Level 1, prerequisite for becoming an apprentice cook) from the Alfred Campus of the University of Guelph for the Apprentice Cook - Level 1 or Certified Assistant Cook component. At the end of this level, the graduating learner is also recognized as an Assistant Cook in the market place. As a result, graduating learners who do not want to pursue the subsequent steps of their vocational training (Level 2 to become a Certified Cook or Level 3 to become a Certified Chef) can work as a Certified Assistant Cook.

The Alfred Campus of the University of Guelph provided the instructional content recognized by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities for the Cook – Level 1 component. In the modified Fast Track program, the vocational training was therefore spread out over 462 hours. This modified Fast Track program includes 22 weeks of theoretical and practical training, in the classroom and in the laboratory, and 3 weeks of workplace-based training. The classroom training, which is now spread over 5 days / week for a total of 30 hours / week, is divided as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Hours/week</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vocational component</strong> (Introduction to food services, Safety and security, Food preparation and equipment, Nutrition, Managing food services, Bakery and pastry products, Practical culinary techniques and equipment, Cooking techniques, Culinary theories, Laboratories, etc.)</td>
<td>21 hours/week X 22 weeks</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Basic training component</strong> (Written communication and Computer technology, Employment support, Preparation for on-the-job training, Verbal communication)</td>
<td>9 hours/week X 22 weeks</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total of training hours</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>660</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-the-job training</td>
<td></td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total of learning hours</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>765</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taken from content harmonization meetings for the Food Services Assistant/Cook Level 1 program, Centre d’apprentissage et de perfectionnement inc.

23 To obtain the Cook certification, a learner must complete the theoretical training at the first level (25 weeks included in the Fast Track program), complete the number of hours in the workplace required for an employer-sponsored apprentice (6,000 hours), complete the subsequent theoretical training steps required for this apprenticeship program (one or two other steps), and complete his or her Ontario secondary school diploma or obtain a recognized equivalence before the end of the final step as an apprentice.
3.4.1.3 Reflections on the Fast Track programs

During the years that followed the creation of the first Fast Track programs, the CAP’s practitioners observed that the number of learners being referred to these joint programs was growing constantly compared to the traditional literacy programs. These programs quickly became popular with the unemployed adult clientele and the referral agencies that are in regular contact with this clientele. Here is an overview of the recruitment for these programs over a 10-year period (2000 to 2010):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the TGV (Fast Track program)</th>
<th>Number of times the programs have been offered</th>
<th>Number of registered learners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Food Services Assistant/Cook- Level 1*</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horticultural techniques*/Landscaping and Horticultural production</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Clerk</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certified Sales Professional</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Support Worker</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Mechanic Millwright (IMM)*</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Automation and Bookkeeping Clerk</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting Clerk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning and Teaching Assistant</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parts Officer (Clerk)*</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welder</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approximate total</strong></td>
<td><strong>45</strong></td>
<td><strong>525</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Level 1 of the Apprenticeship Ontario program

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24 Some Fast Track programs have changed their name over the years in order to better reflect changes made and new directions taken.

25 How frequently a program is offered depends in part on the demand, meaning the employment opportunities in the local labour market and the interest expressed by adult learners for the program.

26 These figures indicate the number of learners registered at the beginning of the program and not those who completed it. At the time of writing this document, the numbers of learners who completed the Fast Track programs or who found employment were not available.
In looking over this table, we can see that 525 adult learners have participated in the CAP’s Fast Track programs, which is an impressive number given the size of the communities in Prescott County. From the start, these programs went beyond our expectations in achieving the integration objectives. Over the first seven or eight years, we observed impressive job placement rates in a small semi-urban and rural market, which is no small achievement. The high academic success rates may be attributed to the specific attention paid to the documents being used (according to literacy levels) and to the evaluation procedures that were adapted to certain difficulties with written work, which continued to evolve within the context of the continuing evaluation processes.

What is more, the follow-up data showed that most of the reasons given by the few learners who did not find work were related to various factors beyond the training program’s control (e.g.: dropping out because of illness, moving, personal or family problems, etc.). There were, however, a small number of cases where the learners had difficulty functioning in their workplace (in the case of on-the-job training or a job placement). In these cases, the employers raised more behavioural issues and problems with interpersonal skills (generic skills) than problems with technical skills or conventional literacy skills (reading, writing, mathematics).

The program evaluations carried out from 2000 to 2010 showed that learners greatly appreciated the training. They particularly liked the pace of learning and the fact that communication courses (oral, written, and English as a second language) and computer technology courses were often directly related to duties arising from the vocational and technical training. However, regular evaluations of the Fast Track programs did bring out weaknesses that needed to be corrected along the way, including the following:

- move the on-the-job training and integrate it into the training period in order to, on the one hand, allow learners to get feedback on their practicum from the trainers and, on the other hand, to harmonize with the income support policies of certain referral agencies;
- have the practicum evaluated by the trainers and the employers rather than the practicum managers, in order to make more systematic links between the course and the transfer into the workplace;
- promote the integration of learning and assessment activities for employability skills into all the courses, by all the trainers, in order to share this responsibility with the entire training team, given the crosscutting nature of generic skills that specifically support the development of employability;
- promote the integration of English-language skills into all the courses instead of attempting to set up an English-as-a-working-language course.

Other Fast Track programs also needed to be adjusted. We have already explained the changes made to the Food Services Assistant and Assistant Cook certificate. The Office Clerk certificate also evolved to become the Office Automation and Bookkeeping Clerk in order to increase employment opportunities and to harmonize with the types of skills being sought (multitasking) in small and medium enterprises, which represent the vast majority of local employers for office work.

Some Fast Track programs became successful very quickly, while others were not as successful as hoped. And lastly, ongoing analyses of the milieu and continuous program evaluations led the CAP and its partners to modify certain Fast Track programs or to quite simply stop offering them. Retail Sales programs (Sales Clerk/Certified Sales Professional) were only offered a few times because they did not generate much interest among the employers in this sector of activity. As a result, the learning public’s interest gradually diminished as well. The Parts Clerk program was only offered one time given its small employment market. The same observation was made for the Horticulture Technician after it was offered twice. What is more, this trade was considered to be seasonal work by the employability services and was therefore not eligible for the employment insurance recipients. The Early Childhood Education and Welding programs were only offered one time, because it was impossible to find the strategic partnerships needed after that.
3.4.2 The CAP’s series of questions for the implementation, assessment and adjustment of an integrated intervention

It rapidly became clear to the CAP that the creation of integrated training services for adults with low literacy skills depends ultimately on the ability of key players in the local adult training community to trust each other enough to create strategic partnerships and to pool their human, material and educational resources. For the purposes of properly identifying the sequences required to implement strategic partnerships and assessing all the issues related to each of these sequences, the CAP adopted an analytical grid to identify the steps and conditions for a successful partnership within the context of a joint, integrated andragogical intervention for adults with low literacy skills.

The following diagram attempts to show the sequences involved in developing such strategic partnerships and the categories of issues in adult education in relation to these sequences, as they are perceived by the CAP’s creators.

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This section is taken from the document entitled *Modèle d’implantation des programmes de formation Fast-Track* produced for the CAP by Diane Dugas, in cooperation with Donald Lurette, in 2005.
The CAP has attempted to show the sequence in which andragogical challenges appear with a diagram using the form of an inverted pyramid, for two key reasons:

- The desire to provide a visual overview of the chronology of the issues addressed (sequences);
- The desire to illustrate the relativity of the quantity of work and resources to be invested in each level.

As a result, the lower levels of the inverted pyramid are shorter, because the diagram is attempting to illustrate with this visual representation (from smaller to larger moving in an upward direction) the amount of work needed within each sequence of implementing the partnership. It is estimated that the time and energy required to analyze and address the first philosophical and policy issues is less than that required for subsequent issues. With that in mind, the administrative and teaching issues are represented as being longer horizontally, because they require more time and resources in order to achieve a joint, integrated training program. However, note that the analysis of the first two issues (at the base of the inverted pyramid) will be critical for knowing whether the visions, organizational cultures, and the mandates of the involved decision makers are compatible with their involvement in a strategic partnership. If the visions and organizational cultures are too different, the base of the inverted pyramid will be too weak and it will be impossible to develop the upper issues. We need to first address and resolve the two levels of issues at the base in order to then address the two issues on the upper levels.

Guiding questions have been proposed to help address the various categories of issues in the establishment of strategic partnerships with a view to offering integrated adult training services. Even though it seems like a lot of work, this thought process will be important, because it becomes an investment that translates in the medium-term into greater flexibility in the interagency relationships. In addition, such an analysis is essential in our opinion. This analysis helps us make better choices in partners and, once the pilot has been successful, provides a very fertile ground for creating additional programs inside the same partnerships, where it will be possible to introduce a new way of collaborating where all partners come out winners.

In analyzing the philosophical issues and organizational cultures, we can explore the compatibility being sought between the partners to create and undertake a partnership with such an exceptional level of service integration. Exploring the organizational culture of each partner will help to decide whether or not their values and educational beliefs are compatible. It is important to understand the representations and visions of each one with respect to adult training and inter-program and inter-agency partnerships. In this initial planning exercise, certain key questions need to be answered, for example:

- What is the partner’s prevailing ideology?
- What impact does this ideology have on its organizational culture and its ability to participate in partnerships?
- What is the partner’s vision of the partnership?
- Does this partner see its other partners as being legitimate and equal, no matter what the nature of their services, or as sub-contractors that help improve its service and image?
- Can the partner work in a multilateral context, where decisions and responsibilities are shared, or does it tend to make unilateral decisions?
- What are the partner’s true interests?
- Is the partner more concerned about its institutional needs or is there room to take into account the needs of learners when organizing its services (focused on its programs and structures, or focused on the learner and services that meet the learner’s needs)?
2nd level of the inverted pyramid:  
Policy issues

The second category of issues helps to explore the complementarity of services and the jurisdictions of each partner. Exploring the partner’s jurisdiction and their level of accountability to public bodies helps to decide whether their educational interventions may be compatible and complementary. In this second planning exercise, certain key questions need to be answered, for example:

- Are the jurisdictions of training programs well defined?
- Is there duplication or a continuum of services?
- Is there competition or complementarity?
- Is there a need to harmonize the jurisdiction of the literacy program with other training programs, and vice versa?
- How can we facilitate the planning of local adult training services, while respecting the jurisdictions and accountability requirements of everyone?
- Is there a need to create a forum for local collaboration (single entry point, joint committee for a specific initiative, roundtable, multiservice centre, etc.) in order to encourage and support the creation of complementary joint programs?
- How do we implement a joint program in which all the partners will feel like winners on the following fronts: respecting administrative requirements; respecting jurisdictions; respecting intervention philosophies (training, insertion, etc.)?
- Is the literacy program as attractive as other training programs?
- Whether the answer is yes or no, what are the implications?
- How can we enhance the literacy program to make it more attractive?
- How do we ease the structural barriers that limit the chances of offering integrated services that correspond adequately to the complex needs of adults with lower literacy skills?
- Together with our partners, can we define the recognized forms of certification tailored to the nature of the program (college certification; certification from a professional association or any other governmental agency; academic certification related to obtaining a secondary school diploma) in a specialized training pathway that is based on an approach aimed at improving literacy levels?

The joint, integrated training projects will lead the partners to define their respective jurisdictions, which should in turn lead to agreements on sharing these jurisdictions. As we have mentioned, these agreements are the foundation of a joint and integrated training project, which will ultimately lead to greater local cohesion in order to offer better services to adult learners with low literacy skills.

3rd level of the inverted pyramid:  
Administrative and local coordination issues

In analysing administrative issues, we can explore and explain the process of pooling each partner’s resources. Here we can speak about the required financial structure before proceeding with the appropriate adult education package. Exploring how to pool together each partner’s resources helps to identify whether the educational interventions of partners can be achieved, given the availability of human and financial resources. In this third planning exercise, certain key questions need to be answered, for example:

- How can we explore the creation of quality adult training programs that meet the socio-economic needs of the local community, all at an affordable price for the partnering organizations?
- Can we convince the partners to introduce a centralized system to deal with the following tasks: intake and registration, assessment of literacy levels, identification of learner needs, and management of training and administrative files?
- In this respect, are there strategic partnerships to be developed with certain natural referral partners (income support, employability services, compensation, etc.) through the intermediary of joint and integrated services?
In analyzing the teaching issues, we can explore the training sequences that are relevant to the needs of adults with low literacy skills. Exploring how to pool together each partner’s resources will help to decide whether or not the partners’ educational interventions can be adapted to the complex needs of a clientele with low literacy skills that faces many psychosocial barriers to learning. In this fourth planning exercise, certain key questions need to be answered, for example:

- Can we create andragogical models based on the teaching of success that provide the necessary support to adult learners with low literacy skills and that take certain psychosocial barriers to learning and integration into account?

- Can we create andragogical models based on partnerships that provide the certifications and the recognition of learning needed by adult learners with lower literacy skills and that take certain institutional and structural barriers to training into account?

- Can we anticipate educational practices that will facilitate interventions with adults with varying levels of skills, but similar needs for socio-professional insertion?

- Can we establish, in a joint training project, an andragogical approach that allows for the following:
  - to offer specialized training that is adapted to the literacy levels of adults with low literacy skills?
  - to incorporate strategic training in literacy skills development that supports the learner in undertaking specialized training (the teaching of success)?
  - to incorporate an integration component in a personal project (e.g.: job)?
  - to consider the needs of learners with a low literacy level and certain psychosocial barriers to learning?
  - to reconcile the approaches to adult education that are specific to the identity and mandate of each training partner?
  - to establish the conditions for passing (criterion level, passing level) according to the issues of each partner and in relation to the administrative guidelines of the government programs that provide grants?
Part 4

Advantages of an Integrated and Collaborative Model

The literacy development model being recommended here offers attractive advantages for learners and for the education and support network intended for them. That is the topic of this fourth section of the report.

4.1 Advantages for learners with low literacy skills

Avoiding the negative labelling associated with literacy programs

One of the distinct advantages of the integrated approach is that it allows for literacy training to be incorporated into an educational package that is more dignified in the eyes of adult learners who are afraid of being labelled as “illiterate.” In this respect, the literacy training process is integrated into a more global training initiative, where the focus is on the components of training that correspond more to the needs felt by adult learners (professional development, parental development, etc.).

Facilitating access to the labour market within a realistic timeframe

Some integrated programs focus on developing technical and vocational skills; on the one hand, they target skills in expanding sectors, and on the other, trades that adults with low literacy skills will be capable of undertaking in a realistic timeline, all while attaining an acceptable level of literacy. Integrated and joint programs will be especially beneficial for learners who would have difficulty completing a traditional literacy process and even more difficulty following their academic pathway in a linear fashion in a more advanced program (e.g.: completing a secondary school diploma or a vocational training). In short, by integrating basic and vocational training, learners with low literacy skills can qualify, while they would otherwise have difficulty gaining access to this part of their training pathway.
Avoiding certain learning barriers, stimulating the motivation to learn

The recommended joint and integrated services approach in adult education is particularly beneficial for learners with low literacy skills who do not participate in traditional literacy programs, because of all sorts of personal and structural barriers, or who participate in them but do not make progress. As a result, the integrated training approach helps to pool various adult education resources in order to, on the one hand, offer better services to adults with low literacy skills by maximizing the educational resources at their disposal for developing multiple skills that meet their needs, and on the other, to offer targeted learners the various certifications and learning recognitions needed to integrate their personal project (employment, further training, etc.).

Furthermore, integrated programs help to avoid a lack of motivation to improve basic skills (psycho-social barrier) that is often observed among many adults with low literacy skills, because such programs give them access to training that is both relevant and qualifying and that meets their needs. As an example, when the literacy training resources are linked to specific vocational training resources in a specific employment sector, or even to training meant to develop the parental role, we are responding to a felt need and in so doing, we are increasing the adult’s motivation. What is more, the certificate and certification of training (formal recognition) bring a certain amount of prestige to the program (making it more attractive), thus increasing the motivation to participate in it.

Meeting the participation criteria of most referral agencies

Integrated programs are also advantageous for adults who have to respect the participation policies of income maintenance programs from various referral agencies (e.g.: social assistance, employment insurance, etc.). Indeed, some of the key features of integrated programs fit well with the criteria set by referral agencies:

- They are for a predetermined amount of time;
- They often include one or several forms of certification or recognition;
- They take into account the main structural and psycho-social barriers that can affect the participation and learning of a clientele with low literacy skills;
- They can lead quickly to employment;
- Their participation costs are minimal;
- The literacy training component provides for educational support all along the pathway to specialized training.

Adapting teaching practices to the realities of adults with low literacy skills

Integrated training programs help provide a basic skills training component that facilitates the strategic development of literacy skills and other types of complementary skills. Evaluation and marking procedures can be designed to overcome difficulties with writing. This is all part of a context wherein we want to introduce pedagogy of success and in so doing break down negative perceptions among many learners with low literacy skills about their ability to learn and succeed, especially within a formal learning context.

In this respect, integrated training programs are better adapted to the literacy levels of learners with low literacy skills, their barriers to learning, and their complex needs of making a successful transition into the workforce or into other social roles. By design, joint and integrated programs allow learners to:

- Benefit from the many educational resources of different partners;
- Receive adapted instructional and logistical support;
- Receive an education that is adapted to their level of literacy and relevant to their needs for socio-economic insertion;
- Obtain formal certification or recognition for their learning;
- Participate in a preparatory process with a view to integrating the labour market or another sphere of community life.
4.2 Advantages for agencies offering literacy and basic training programs

**Positively changing the perception of literacy training programs**

One of the distinct advantages of integrated programs is that they allow for the literacy training process to be incorporated into a more global training program that focuses on vocational training or other specialized training. In this respect, services that strategically integrate literacy training interventions into an educational package will likely lead to a much more positive perception of literacy training programs inside the stakeholder networks (structural barrier) and avoid the negative perceptions of adults in general (psychosocial barrier). What is more, integrated programs, as their name suggests, help to formalize the integration of learning programs and content in order to better structure the andragogical intervention for adults with low literacy skills.

**Positive quantitative impacts for literacy training programs**

We believe there will be several outcomes from the creation of integrated, joint training programs for the organizations delivering literacy services and their respective communities, as follows:

- Increased volume of learners in the literacy training programs or projects;
- Higher retention rates of the clientele with low literacy rates in the programs;
- Increased interest on the part of referral agencies in the new programs with proactive socio-economic insertion components;
- Increased literacy levels among those clients registered in these programs;
- Increased satisfaction on the part of learners who take these programs;
- Increased literacy level overall in the communities.

4.3 Advantages for the other partners

**Proposing solutions to the barriers to learning and to participating in training; building the confidence of referral partners**

The integrated approach allows literacy training organizations and their partners to build strategic partnerships in order to take into account the many psychosocial barriers of learners and to reduce the institutional and structural barriers brought on by the service delivery systems. Through these joint and integrated programs, we can realistically reconcile the needs of referral agencies (employment insurance or other employability services, social assistance programs, injured worker program, etc.) with the needs of learners with low literacy skills.

Again, literacy training interventions can be made more attractive for the referral agencies by focusing on the “integrated” nature of certain initiatives, which take into account the main structural and psychosocial barriers that can undermine the participation and learning of a clientele with low literacy skills. Furthermore, recognized certifications (a secondary, vocational or college-level certificate) bring prestige to the program for some referral agencies. These certifications also bring a certain amount of diversity to the program (basic training in communications, computers, employability, training for a trade, training in parental skills, etc.) thereby responding to a series of needs that are difficult to fulfill with one single program for adults with multiple needs, and who are, for the most part, the clients of referral agencies.

**Promoting the complementarity of adult services in the community**

Joint and integrated programs allow each partner to expand its operating procedures in order to move towards a more horizontal management structure. They allow partners to undertake an inter-program project while still maintaining their management autonomy using an inter-agency steering committee. This form of management ensures that the jurisdictions and administrative requirements of each program are respected, while still ensuring the training program—which extends beyond the capacities of each individual organization or program—functions properly.

By their very nature, joint and integrated programs ensure that inter-program referrals occur because the referral and registration procedures are shared amongst the partners. In this context, the same learner can be offered services by several service providers at the same time. As a result, the
partners do not feel penalized when the learners receive
the service from another collaborator. And the partners’
programs are perceived as being complementary rather
than competitive.

And finally, integrated programs—because of their multi-
program and multi-partner nature—result in various col-
laborative agreements negotiated between the different
partners in the community. This positive dynamic of
exchange and collaboration make it easier for these joint
and integrated training programs to become part of a
continuum of services that is coherent and complement-
ary in the community.
Part 5

Difficulties and Challenges of an Integrated and Collaborative Model

Although the integrated services approach for the strategic development of literacy offers advantages for learners with low literacy skills and public organizations in adult education, there is nothing automatic about it; the approach presents many challenges. The building blocks of collaboration and complementarity on which its implementation is based contrast with certain organizational and practical cultures, and this could represent significant obstacles for the development of integrated initiatives. In this fifth section, we will attempt to identify a few important challenges and difficulties in the implementation of an integrated approach.

5.1 Tensions within the partnership

As we have seen in the preceding sections, the integrated services approach being recommended here requires, in most cases, various types of strategic partnerships. All of this demands time, effort, compromise, and patience, especially when organizing the delivery of integrated adult education services, defining the mandates of each partner, planning equitable funding, ensuring the logistics for the recruitment and referral of learners, jointly developing the training content, setting up the transportation, and organizing the adult education coaching for trainers, etc.

Partnerships and high-wire balancing acts: Fast Track training programs arose from a collaborative process between various training and employment support programs/services for adults. This process is demanding, given the diversity of the agencies involved (literacy, vocational training, accredited training, income maintenance, employment integration or employability services…) and the complexity of the links to be made. Every day we struggle with the terms and conditions related to the accountability and funding of the established partners. Indeed, these partners are beholden to funders from four levels of government: municipal, regional, provincial, and federal. Creating Fast Track training programs in this arena is therefore a high-wire balancing act (Dugas, 2005, taken from Lurette, 2008, p. 24; free translation).
**Trust and respect between the partners**

The recommended strategic partnership approach is based on one key element: trust among the partnering organizations. It is not necessarily easy to instil this trust; it is a long-term task. Establishing and maintaining a productive partnership demands significant effort. Although a good partnership provides mutual advantages, it may also bring disadvantages and challenges. Here are a few points to take into consideration:

- A partnership with an organization that projects a negative image in the community may be detrimental to the project’s image, and the same applies if the partnership fails;
- Bureaucratic processes or systems may hamper the process of establishing a partnership;
- Obstacles related to the organizational culture (e.g.: differences in organizational values and resistance to change) may compromise the establishment of partnerships;
- A partner may suddenly change strategic direction and its priorities, which would put the existing agreements in jeopardy.

That said, a partnership will be as strong as the willingness of its partners to set it up and keep it operational. Generally, a partner’s commitment to engage in a true partnership dynamic is largely dependent on its organizational culture. Evaluating the true capacity of each partner to work in a partner-based structure is a serious challenge.

In this respect, we have identified through our previous work and experience, other constraints on the development of joint and integrated programs. Among other points, we have observed that the culture of collaboration is under-developed across the adult education network in Ontario, to the benefit of a culture of competition and “protectionism.” Program managers and the various participating practitioners—and this applies as much to literacy training and basic training programs as to other adult training programs or referral programs—find it difficult to rid themselves of old reflexes or automatic responses that favour falling back on their own jurisdictions, that stir up distrust towards other public programs, and that maintain the mistaken perception that we can do everything better alone. It must be noted that the preferred methods for funding these programs by the various levels of government have fed into and strengthened this competitive culture between public and comple-

5.2 Strains associated with the investments required during the implementation phase

Another challenge in establishing integrated interventions is that they often require a considerable investment in time, information and, to a lesser agree, financial resources and specific intervention staff, particularly during the implementation phase. In fact, to meet the administrative and instructional needs of implementing integrated programs, the partners are asked to invest specifically in the planning of implementation logistics. The main partnering organizations need to free up resources in order to do content development or adaptation, recruitment, and coaching of the trainers who will be required to offer these new programs. Furthermore, the new programs that incorporate the development of all sorts of skills (essential, specialized and generic) demand a lot of liaison work. There are also all the painstaking logistics involved with the infrastructure and material resources needed to market the programs (accommodations, laboratories, transportation, etc.). All the efforts committed during the implementation phase diminish however as the partnering organizations learn to work together and they are reinvested as soon as the same program is offered a second time.

**The need to train the trainers**

In the context of adapting and developing a new program, the initial and continued training of trainers becomes indispensable; there is also need to attribute the necessary resources to this training, especially at the start of the initiative. In this regard, strategic working meetings with the trainers need to be set up in the early days of the program. These meetings are essential, because they will act as working sessions to organize and link up the interventions and training content for all the skills types to be developed. They will also serve as initial training sessions to allow the team members to become familiar with the integrated nature of the program and the particularities of the target clientele.

Continuous coaching meetings between the program coordinator(s) and the training team will also be required at regular intervals throughout the course of the program so that the needed adjustments can be made. The adjustments may be made at the program management level (ongoing management) or training practices level. These meetings also provide essential continued training forums to maximize on-the-job or practical learning...
Towards an Integrated Model to Support the Literacy Development of Francophones in Canada

A specific investment on the part of literacy training organizations

As we have mentioned, our proposed model promotes a strategic repositioning of literacy training organizations so they can act as both complementary organizations to other public services and as key partners in reaching the clientele with low literacy skills. The model therefore recommends that the various key players in these organizations take on a leadership role in their respective communities in order to create a local culture of collaboration for the development of services for adults with low literacy skills. Generally speaking, this strategic repositioning requires a significant amount of effort for the creation and maintenance of integrated initiatives.

Indeed, a field survey conducted by the CAP in Ontario in 2003 showed that at the time, very few joint or integrated service delivery programs included a literacy training component. The report from this study also mentioned that the existing integrated programs were very precarious. It showed that:

integrated programs entail a significant additional workload that is assumed for the most part by literacy training programs in order to ensure their existence and maintain all the partnerships and multi-party agreements underlying their implementation and coordination, and on the other hand, they do not get any specific financing that would take into account the extra resources needed to ensure the delivery of initiatives that are as rich and unique (Lurette and Dugas, 2003, p. 70; free translation).

5.3 Strains associated with andragogical choices

Integrated programs that are implemented from a strategic perspective of developing literacy lead practitioners in adult education into making choices that are sometimes based on more pragmatic considerations in order to avoid barriers to learning. Generally speaking, these choices may cause tension given the ideological foundations for adult education that some individuals and their organizations might have.

The “Fast” dimension of Fast Track programs vs. lifelong learning

Note for example the choice that was made to design short-term training programs (the Fast Track or Très grande vitesse dimension) in order to avoid psychosocial and structural barriers. This choice may be perceived as an overly utilitarian and functionalist response to the needs of employment markets that does little to complement a more holistic vision of lifelong learning wherein the literacy training of adults is considered to be a fundamental step in educating both the citizen learner and the worker learner. In our opinion, the two are not mutually exclusive: 28 “Adapted training is not necessarily discount training, and in a democratic society the education of individuals—and especially adults—must be socially recognized and sanctioned.” (Wagner, cited in Hautecoeur, 2000, p. 92; free translation)

The delicate position of English

Note also the thorny choice of developing second-language language skills that are specific to the learner’s integration environment (often Anglo dominant environments outside of Quebec). This choice might be perceived as a threat to preserving the culture and first language of Francophone learners. Historically, these so-called “bilingual” approaches have not always served the cause of Francophone communities in Canada. What is more, the educa-

28 The proposed model is set around integrated services and is based on a finding from the most recent international surveys on adult literacy, which compare literacy skills to muscles: The more they are used, regardless of the context, the better they are maintained and the more quickly they improve. This is why we believe that an integrated educational services approach does not curb the development of literacy skills compared to participation in a traditional, full-time literacy training program.
tion sector, especially in a minority setting, always carries the legacy of being a culture of “purist linguists” who position the French language more as a learning object itself and who see literacy training as a way of promoting the use of this language to adults with low literacy skills. In this respect, the desire to take English into account in order to meet the integration needs of Francophones is a significant challenge; it is not always easy to reconcile the tension between the vision of an educator-linguist who is more focused on the language as a learning object (learn French correctly first of all in order to develop as a Francophone) with the vision of an educator-adult educator who is more focused on the language as an instrument of learning (use French as an instrument of learning to develop various skills in order to better function as a Francophone community member).

The educator/adult educator opts for a pragmatic approach in order to respond to the needs expressed by Francophones from all environments and to ensure the relevance of Francophone adult education programs with their capacity to take the integration-related language needs of learners into account in the different spheres of community and professional life.

To what degree is the cultural capacity of communities being identified and emphasized? Are traditional resources sufficient to effectively implement development projects? Are they compatible and open to the introduction of new technologies? Are adult educators prepared for intercultural endogenous development interventions with their local partners? With which methodologies have they been able to effectively experiment? What institutions support them? Which would need to be created? (Hautecoeur, 2000, p. 28; free translation)
Conclusion

Towards a Learning Community…

The andragogical model presented in this document suggests ways to reorganize adult education services for people with low literacy skills in Canada. These pointers suggest drawing upon a more varied array of educational services in a given community in order to facilitate literacy development among adults with low literacy skills in a more integrated fashion. To do so, organizations responsible for adult education programs must stop being guided by structural and institutional requirements in order to build on requirements that are based more on andragogical and community-based imperatives. Such an approach will allow organizations that wish to do so to function in such a way that collaboration is not just a theoretical concept, but rather a true practice based on sharing human and material resources for the good of adults who want to get training that satisfies their actual needs and their literacy profile.

From the development of literacy training programs… towards continued skills development

The recommended model focuses more on the development of literacy skills for people with low literacy skills than on merely literacy training. Essential and generic skills are indispensable for a wide variety of tasks in the workplace and in everyday life. Therefore, they provide adults with a broader foundation on which the learning of new skills can be supported (specialized skills, for example). In this respect, essential and generic skills broaden horizontally the potential goals for literacy skills development in training initiatives for adults with low literacy skills. What is more, essential and generic skills increase people’s ability to adapt to change throughout their lifetime: the development of these skills is like a continuum that goes beyond the skill levels targeted by traditional literacy training programs. We could therefore talk about broadening vertically the potential goals for literacy skills development in training initiatives aimed at adults.

That said, the continuum of essential and generic skills development applies, in our opinion, to an even broader perspective of adult education. It encourages us to position the development of literacy skills in a broader context, namely the continuum of lifetime skills development. By focusing on educational interventions for adults with low literacy skills that meet the complex needs of integration, we can design interventions that help to develop the literacy skills (essential and generic skills) and specialized skills of learners as one of the possible gateways into a broader continuum of skills development.

Indeed, according to the IALS in 1994 and the IALSS in 2003, literacy skills are like muscles: the more they are used, regardless of the context, the better they are maintained and the more quickly they improve. In this respect, the forums and the context for literacy skills development go beyond the formal and informal training settings. The continued development of skills for adults with low literacy skills takes place in several spheres of their life. As a result, this view confirms the idea that training initiatives for adults with low literacy skills must be designed strategically over time in order to position them in a larger movement of continued skills development. That said, literacy development is a shared responsibility. The time spent in formal training only represents for the adult learner a strategic sequence that is limited in its objectives and in time.
From continued skills development using integrated interventions... towards a continuum of services in a community

One of the significant advantages of the integrated andragogical approach recommended in this document is that it allows the integration of literacy training into a more complete educational package in order to meet the complex and multiple needs of adult learners with low literacy skills. In this respect, the literacy training process is integrated into a more global training initiative, where the focus is on the components of training that correspond to the felt needs of adult learners. These integrated initiatives, because of their multi-program and multi-partner nature, give rise to various collaboration and consultation agreements between different local entities. This dynamic allows local training programs to be better positioned within a continuum of services that ultimately leads to a more effective integration of learners into their community and that contributes to the development of the literacy of the community.

In this respect, we believe it is more effective for a local adult training network to design its training programs according to a continuum-of-services approach, without making any distinction for specific service providers. In our opinion, this approach makes it easier to reach the pool of potential adult learners in order to then avoid several obstacles to training. What is more, the continuum-of-services approach allows for several training services to be presented to the adult population within one single offering, which simplifies the perception people may have of the adult education system. This approach seems to be more compatible with a view of continued skills development using training initiatives that are designed accordingly.
Towards an Integrated Model to Support the Literacy Development of Francophones in Canada

From a continuum of learning services... towards a learning community; from a fully literate society... towards learning communities

The recommended model seems to be a promising way, in our opinion, to promote literacy development in communities. In this respect, we believe that andragogy deals with the entire adult learning “system”: the interests of the targeted adult learners; the nature of the learning objects; learning styles (how educational content is transmitted and how new skills are acquired); the learning environment (community, types of support, etc.); and the possible learning transfers. That said, all of these elements must be taken into account within the design of an andragogical intervention.

This andragogical approach allows us to not limit ourselves to analyzing an adult learner according to a specific program, but rather to analyze the entire group of adult learners in their community. The ultimate goals of a such an approach are to promote the development of multiple skills in adult learners throughout their lifetime (continuum of skills) through an offering of integrated educational services (continuum of learning services) for a given community (learning community).

This andragogical model favours a local community-development approach that is based mainly on a vision of literacy development for people rather than on the development of training programs. Our vision of literacy development favours the continued development of all sorts of skills in adult learners, a development rooted in a specific design of the educational intervention, regardless of the literacy levels of these adult learners. In this approach, a community will always try to employ all the resources available in order to allow its population to increase its literacy level.

Striving for a learning community seems more promising, in our opinion, than striving for a fully literate society. The fully literate society, in addition to being unattainable in a practical sense, is an end in itself. It proposes the maximum of literacy training to bring the entire population to a minimum acceptable level of basic skills, according to arbitrary standards beyond the adult learner’s control. This seems unrealistic and less than desirable in our opinion, given the diversity of human needs and the complexity of society. A learning community is a community dynamic that we can work towards, and is not a goal to achieve in itself. This community dynamic is based on an andragogical vision of the development of community members that is mainly inspired by learning initiatives that meet the needs of this community.

... towards learning communities in Canada by way of pilot projects testing the FCAF model

Because of their multi-program and multi-partner nature, the integrated initiatives that we have proposed in our model give rise to various collaboration and consultation agreements between different local entities. We are aware that the implementation of such initiatives is no small task. However, after one cycle of strategic partnerships and of offering integrated services, everything will no doubt be easier for the partners, with new experiences being built on what has been already been achieved. Other partnerships and initiatives should follow, and they should help to develop a more coherent learning community. The FCAF has been reflecting on these ideas and is starting to act upon them. Projects to test the model are underway in several provinces; these projects are fertile ground for practitioners to begin reflecting on these ideas as well. Best of luck to all these pioneers!


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