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Recognizing Prior Learning in Saskatchewan  
Provincial Needs Assessment  
& Blueprint for Action

- Final Report -

Prepared For:

**Recognizing Prior Learning Coordinating Group (RCG)**

Prepared By:

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November, 2008

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**Provincial Needs Assessment**  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The knowledge, skills and attitudes brought to the workplace by Saskatchewan people can be reliably assessed and recognized, contributing to the province's economic development and growth. The methods to address the challenge of assessment and documentation of prior learning and skill development are found in programs and services encompassed under the heading of Recognizing Prior Learning (RPL).

Saskatchewan's current economy accentuates the need for RPL tools and techniques. Steady employment growth is forecast for Saskatchewan. According to Statistics Canada, a new record high 514,900 people were employed in Saskatchewan in July 2008, with an unemployment rate of 4.8%.<sup>1</sup> The province's economic growth is expected to create thousands of new employment opportunities in the next several years. In August of 2008 alone, employment in Saskatchewan increased by 6,000 positions with employment gains in mining, oil and gas, construction, health care and social assistance.<sup>2</sup>

The province needs more qualified workers. A significant number of Saskatchewan employers report that they are having difficulty filling vacant employment positions. According to the Federation of Canadian Independent Business, 38.3% of Saskatchewan's small and medium-sized businesses reported that they were short-staffed for a period of four months or greater in 2007, representing 18,000 employment positions.<sup>3</sup> It is not surprising that a shortage of labour is reported to be a major concern for 65.1% of Saskatchewan business.<sup>4</sup> Given this labour market reality, employers and industry representatives are seeking new ways to recruit and retain qualified labour. Today, many employers will consider an individual's prior learning and workplace training in lieu of the credentials that they may have required during times of greater labour availability. As a

**The provincial labour shortage increases the need for RPL programs and services.**

**RPL expands the labour pool by using tools to identify knowledge, skills and attributes that qualify individuals for employment.**

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, Labour Market Information (LMI), Saskatchewan Job Figures, September, 2008

<sup>2</sup> Labour Force Survey, Statistics Canada, September 5, 2008

<sup>3</sup> Debus, Aneliese, et al, Help Wanted, Labour Shortage Troubles Deepen for SMEs in 2007, Canadian Federation of Independent Business

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

result, many employers need to better understand how to assess and recognize the value of workplace training and prior learning.

This research study has been implemented to document the Saskatchewan need for Recognizing Prior Learning programs and services. It is being conducted on behalf of the Recognizing Prior Learning Coordinating Group (RCG).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The primary tools used to conduct this needs assessment research have included; a comprehensive document and literature review; key informant interviews (management, practitioners, industry), a qualitative<sup>5</sup> survey of employers (public and private sector) who advertised a willingness to consider experience in lieu of formal credentials, a focus group and individual interviews with learners who have experience with RPL processes, and an environmental scan of existing programs and services both inside and outside Saskatchewan. The needs assessment was conducted from March 2008 to September, 2008.

### **Research methods:**

- Key Informant Interviews
- Employer Survey
- Learner Focus Group and Interviews
- Document/Literature Review
- Environmental Scan

## **NEEDS ASSESSMENT FINDINGS**

Three key target groups for RPL programs and services emerge. Each target group identifies programming and service needs. Common themes and needs are also identified by the three groups.



***Individuals Involved in Providing RPL Services*** – There are a number of educational institutions, employment agencies, sector associations, and individuals who use, research and promote Recognizing Prior Learning tools and processes. People who are, or who have the potential to, deliver and support RPL programs and services comprise the practitioner target group.

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<sup>5</sup> Qualitative Research is designed to better understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviours and interactions. It typically generates non-numerical data. For this research project, a small sample size of employers (27) were surveyed and interviewed through an in-depth telephone-based contact. The result of the work provides a broad-based understanding of employer experience and interest in the assessment of prior knowledge, skills and attitudes as a human resource tool.

Practitioners are typically employed by education and training institutions, such as the universities, technical institutions, regional colleges, public education institutions and non-governmental organizations. A smaller number of RPL practitioners work in sector specific organizations such as the healthcare and tourism sectors. In 2007, the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) introduced a course of study entitled 'Recognition of Prior Learning Practitioner'. Graduates from this program will work as career counselors, human resource managers and in employment recruitment fields.<sup>6</sup> As the number of qualified practitioners increase, the knowledge of the role of RPL in education and employment, and the demand for RPL support and services, will increase.

**Practitioners want to network, access research and share best practices.**

RPL Practitioners identified the need for services to support networking, access to research and to share best practices, tools and programming with others. Practitioners reported a desire to learn from others who are knowledgeable about RPL methods. Interviewees supported the need for a website, a practitioners' network and a venue to share RPL programming and procedures.

**A provincial website offers a venue for networking, sharing best practices and learning from others.**



***The Learner or Individual who is Seeking to Have Their Learning Assessed*** – This target group includes individuals who want to have both their formal and informal learning assessed. The learning could include formal education, on-the-job training, international training and credentials, prior work experience, workplace skills, volunteer efforts, and an assessment of general skills and attitudes.

Learners, job-seekers and current employees represent a significant target audience for RPL programming and services. In other words, learners want to have their prior learning and experience assessed to determine whether they can receive academic credit, avoiding the need to participate in courses where that have already acquired the skills and competencies that are going to be taught. Although the number of people challenging for credits are small today, the growth in the demographic of post-secondary learners would suggest that more adults will be requesting RPL services for credit acquisition in the future. Both the provincial universities and SIAST provide

**Growth in adult learners will increase the number of people who want to use RPL services to challenge for course credits in the future.**

<sup>6</sup> SIAST Website; <http://www.siastr.sk.ca/siastr/educationtraining/advancedcertificate>

opportunities for learners to have their prior learning assessed as part of a challenge for education credits.

Individuals who are currently employed can also utilize RPL tools to support their desire for career advancement. Individuals who can document their prior learning and employment experience have the potential to move to more challenging and advanced work placements.

Another segment of the learner, job seeker and employee target group is comprised of those individuals who have not acquired formal, post-secondary certification. Fully one-quarter of Canadian adults has a high-school education or less.<sup>7</sup> Many of these individuals have work and life experiences that qualify them for work placement however they require support to formally document their skills and abilities.

In Saskatchewan, a growing immigrant population needs their learning and prior credentials recognized, and a large number of Aboriginal people, who may have left the formal school system early, are entering the workforce. These groups provide an important target population for RPL services. They need to have their experience, prior learning and international credentials recognized. Many of these clients will require the support provided by RPL techniques such as a portfolio development to advance their careers.



**Industry** – Those who are seeking to recruit, retain and advance candidates for employment positions constitute a significant target audience for RPL services.

Saskatchewan's business owners, employers and industry associations all recognize that the shortage of available, qualified labour is the most significant barrier to future growth and development in the province. In order to expand the labour pool, more and more employers are prepared to consider hiring individuals with prior learning and experience in lieu of formal credentials and qualifications. The challenge that employers face is how to assess whether an individual's prior learning and experience are sufficient to ensure employment success in a specific employment position.

**To advance employment opportunity, job-seekers and currently employed individuals may want to document their skills and abilities.**

**RPL services are useful to support job-seekers with low levels of formal education, for immigrant populations and for Aboriginal people who may have left formal schooling early.**

**The shrinking labour market requires that RPL tools be used to expand the pool of available labour.**

<sup>7</sup> [Report on Learning in Canada, 2008](#), Canadian Council on Learning, Executive Summary

Large employers have their own human resource departments who invest time, effort and resources into the recruitment and assessment process. Large companies often have well developed occupational profiles, identified workplace competencies and have established a process to assess applicants against these employment criteria. Small and medium-sized companies report that they do not have the human resource capacity to implement RPL programs and tools. Most are unaware of what RPL processes could do for their company. Through the survey of employers completed for this project, it was identified that employers would find it beneficial if they could access services and resources that will assist them to recruit, retain and plan for the development of human resources in their company. RPL tools and techniques, as well as other human resource supports, are needed to advance their human resource capabilities. Employers want this information available through a website that can be accessed conveniently, from anywhere in the province, at any time.

**Access to Human Resource supports through a provincial website, is needed.**

## ***EMERGING THEMES***

As a result of the research and data analysis completed for this needs assessment, a number of themes emerge.

- ◆ **The time for action is now** as a response to the provincial labour shortage, to support the needs identified by Saskatchewan industry, and to address the needs of learners, job-seekers and employees who use RPL tools to enhance their labour market skills and personal development needs.
- ◆ **The benefits of RPL programming and services are well understood** and have been proven to be effective with learners, job-seekers and industry.
- ◆ An **overall lack of awareness** of the need for, and benefits of, RPL programs and services curtails the development and application of RPL as a human resource management tool in Saskatchewan.
- ◆ More **individual, organizational and industry capacity is needed** to advance the use of RPL tools in the province.
- ◆ RPL can be encouraged as a **human resource management tool in the workplace**.

- ◆ **Technology tools** (information website, on-line assessment tools, on-line RPL training, etc.) can be used to enhance RPL programming and services in the province of Saskatchewan.
- ◆ **Client-centered RPL programming** is needed to support individuals who lack the ability to effectively use technology tools and for those who need personalized support to overcome learning and employment barriers.

## ***THE WAY FORWARD - A BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION***

The research conducted for this needs assessment has provided an insight into the programming and service needs of three primary target audiences for RPL programming and services; practitioners, learners/jobseekers, business owners and employers. Future action strategies can be advanced to respond to the common needs of more than one target audience group, while other strategies can be developed to meet the specific needs of a particular target audience. The following actions form the basis of a Blueprint for Action which can be undertaken by the Recognizing Prior Learning Coordinating Group (RCG).

### **Action # 1 Website Development**

*Develop a provincial website with information on the concept and value of Recognizing Prior Learning (RPL) as; an employment recruitment, employment readiness, employee advancement, learning progression, and personal development tool. Include specific menus of resources and tools for each of the target audiences of practitioner, learner/job-seeker and employer/business owners and employees.*

There is potential to develop a single website with broad-based information relevant to all target audiences. In addition, the website could address the specific needs of each target group with a customized menu of information, tools and services for each. All three target groups indicated a desire for a website, although their reasons for accessing the website vary. There are many good RPL materials and tools that have been developed by provincial, national and international researchers, educational institutions, learning organizations and others who have an interest in recognizing and assessing prior learning. These existing materials should be accessed through links to websites, rather than recreating the tools for a Saskatchewan-specific audience. There is value in building on the work of others.

### *Practitioners*

The RPL practitioners in the province are seeking a website that would provide a venue to share best practices, to network with one another and to explore emerging topics for research and development.

### *Learners and Job-Seekers*

Learners want to access a website that will outline the process used to prepare for further education, training and employment. The procedures and steps required to challenge for credits at key educational institutions in the province could be outlined and supported. In addition, there are existing tools to prepare learning and employment portfolios on-line. Links to these tools, as well as information on portfolio learning support available in Saskatchewan, could be provided.

### *Employers and Business Owners*

The employers and business owners target group has identified the need for a website that will provide human resource management tools, including tools that support the assessment and recognition of prior learning. Small and medium-sized business (SME) owners and employers report that they do not have the financial resources to support a dedicated human resource department. SME companies want to learn about human resource management tools through a web-based portal which is available regardless of the time of day or location within the province. Formal RPL tools used for recognition and assessment of learning could be provided, along with links to tools for interviewing, recruitment, retention, compensation, human resource planning and other topics of interest. There are many high quality existing supports and tools available and the website could support linkages to these resources.

Saskatchewan employers who were interviewed for this project acknowledge the value in utilizing tools to recognize and assess the skills of their current employees. Employers and their employees can use RPL processes to identify future advancement and management opportunities for individuals who are currently employed within a particular company. RPL can also be used to develop and implement individual training plans to address gaps in competency and skill acquisition. Employers reported an interest in using and learning about RPL tools as a tool to enhance successful retention of current employees.

## **Action #2 Awareness-Building**

*Develop an RPL awareness strategy customized for each of the target audiences; practitioners, learners, job-seekers, employees, business owners and employers. The Awareness Strategy should outline the benefits of using RPL tools to advance learning, employment and personal development/life-long learning.*

Research conducted for this project highlighted the on-going need for a comprehensive awareness building strategy for all target audiences. A lack of awareness, knowledge and understanding results in fewer people having access to the benefits that RPL tools and procedures can provide.

A future awareness strategy could be developed in partnership with several business associations and organizations. Industry Sector Associations, Chambers of Commerce, Human Resource Departments, the Apprenticeship Association, employment support groups, and others, are appropriate partners for an awareness program targeted at business and industry. Educational institutions, school boards, private educational institutions and industry associations provide partnership opportunities for awareness amongst learners, job-seekers and employees.

## **Action #3 Priority Client Groups**

*Extend client-centered opportunities for specific target groups (immigrants, Aboriginals and job-seeker with multiple employment barriers) to access RPL techniques and tools.*

There are a number of individuals in Saskatchewan who have difficulty accessing full employment opportunities. Some are under-employed, while others lack literacy and prior learning experiences that qualify them for successful employment. Typically, individuals seeking jobs in Saskatchewan use the services of the Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Service (CSCES) offices, located in twenty centres throughout the province, to support their employment search. In the past fiscal year, the number of intervention clients reached 11,607. Although not all of these clients require comprehensive assistance to acquire appropriate employment positions, many use the CSCES offices because they have employment barriers or are in need of coaching and support. Some of these clients would benefit from RPL processes, such as portfolio development, to assist them. Portfolio development has been shown to empower individuals, to raise self-esteem and to address employment readiness skill concerns through the identification of personal skills, abilities and attributes. Can-Sask Employment Centres provide a logical location to further RPL awareness and to provide access to RPL tools, instruction and support. Regional Colleges, First Nations' Band Councils, Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agencies and Community-

Based Organizations, are also potential collaborators and partners to deliver client-centered RPL programming.

#### **Action # 4 Capacity Building**

*Provide opportunity for individuals who support learners, job-seekers and industry to acquire the training to effectively implement and apply RPL tools and techniques.*

In order to advance RPL programming and services in the province, and to ensure that target audiences have access to qualified support personnel, it will be necessary to support the delivery of capacity building within the province. For example, Can Sask, Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) and Regional College career advisors and counselors need to develop a broader knowledge of the application of RPL tools and techniques to enhance employment readiness and personal advancement. There are a number of tools available to support this learning and knowledge acquisition, including the Certified RPL Practitioner Program at SIAST. Seminars and short workshops would also be valuable to advance RPL skills amongst current and potential practitioners. It is also important to build capacity so that one-to-one support can be provided for those individuals who are not able to effectively use technology-based tools to achieve their learning and employment goals and objectives.

#### **Action # 5 Networking**

*Continue to build networking opportunities for practitioners, industry representatives and others to share best management practices, research and RPL knowledge.*

A significant amount of effort has been placed on the development of RPL knowledge and application throughout the province of Saskatchewan. Even so, practitioners and industry representatives report that they do not have a well developed network of contacts which allows them to learn from one another, to explore emerging research and to share best practices. Learning from one another's experience is desirable. There are private and public sector companies that apply RPL tools and techniques that should be included in future networking activities. Many national and international organizations have excellent information tools and resources available on the topic of prior learning assessment. A Saskatchewan Network can build on these resources through website linkages and reciprocal agreements on information sharing. Continued support for the establishment of a provincial RPL network, enhanced by a provincial website and other networking tools (conference, newsletters, existing training programs, etc.) is warranted.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Project Objectives

People are constantly learning. Some of their learning happens as a result of formal, classroom style education and training, while other learning is a result of informal life and work experience. Adult learners acquire a significant amount of their knowledge, skills and abilities through on-the-job experiences, community involvement and through the everyday activity of living. An individual's formal learning is typically documented through official recognition, certification and the granting of diplomas or degrees. Informal learning can also be recognized however, the tools and procedures to recognize this learning are not as well understood or utilized by the majority of the population.

This needs assessment research project has been initiated to better understand the need for the implementation of Recognized Prior Learning (RPL) programs and services in the province of Saskatchewan.

The Recognizing Prior Learning Coordinating Group (RCG) have launched this work to better understand the need for RPL services and to determine how these services can best be provided to various target groups in the province of Saskatchewan.

Specifically, the objectives for this assignment are as follows:

1. Document the current environment for RPL in Saskatchewan and identify programming and service gaps and needs.
2. Identify the future elements of, and structure for, an RPL Centre and/or website in Saskatchewan.
3. Determine the size of the market (clients, stakeholders) for an RPL Centre/website.
4. Identify revenues and costs associated with a future RPL support initiative in Saskatchewan.
5. Identify specific tools and resources to be included in a support initiative and/or website.
6. Develop a "blueprint" that outlines the steps for future development of a RPL support initiative/website for the province of Saskatchewan.

## 1.2 Project Methodology

Several research tasks have been completed to collect data for this Needs Assessment and Future Planning project. Table 1.1 provides a summary of the methodologies used.

<b>Table 1.1 RPL Needs Assessment Research Methodology</b>	
1.	Document and Literature Review
2.	Environmental Scan
3.	Management Interviews
4.	Key Informant Interviews
5.	RPL Users, Focus Group and Interviews
6.	Qualitative Survey of Saskatchewan Employers
7.	Data Analysis
8.	Future Planning, Recommendations and Blueprint for Action

### 1.2.1 Document and Literature Review

A number of relevant documents were identified and reviewed in order to gain an understanding of current RPL research, best practices, program delivery tools, and RPL service needs. A bibliography of the documents and literature that were reviewed is found in Appendix 4 of this report.

### 1.2.2 Environmental Scan

The research completed for this research assignment included a limited scan for programs and services provided in other jurisdictions of Canada and the northern United States. The scan was designed to build on work that has already been completed on behalf of the Coordinating Group (RCG).<sup>8</sup> The key programs found in Saskatchewan are described in Appendix 3 of this report.

### 1.2.3 Management Interviews (6)

A series of interviews with management personnel of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour were conducted. The purpose of these interviews was

<sup>8</sup> The research was designed to build on two previous pieces of research; Petrucka, *A Synthesis of Research Report*, 2007 and J. Van Kleef, S, Amichand, M Ireland, K Orynik and J Potter, *Quality Assurance in PLAR*, Annotated Bibliography, Nov. 2007

to gain an understanding of the provincial government's goals and objectives respecting RPL services in Saskatchewan. Interviews were completed with management staff responsible for immigration services, adult education and employment services. For a list of the Management Interviewees, refer to Appendix 1.

#### [1.2.4 Key Informant Interviews \(32\)](#)

Key Informant interviews were conducted with a wide range of individuals representing industry, practitioners, researchers, and target audience groups (immigrant, Aboriginal, youth, employers). The majority of Key Informant interviews were conducted in-person, following an interview guide developed for each specific group. For a listing of the Key Informant Interviewees, refer to Appendix 1.

#### [1.2.5 RPL User Research \(Focus Group + 4 Interviews\)](#)

In order to gain a better understanding of the experiences that individuals have had with RPL programs and services, two activities were conducted. In Saskatoon, a focus group of learners and job-seekers was convened. In addition, a series of individual interviews were completed with learners who have used an RPL service to advance their learning and career development.

#### [1.2.6 Qualitative Survey of Saskatchewan Employers \(27\)](#)

An important aspect of this research has been to gain knowledge regarding the RPL programming and service needs of Saskatchewan employers. In order to select a group of employers for interview, employment advertisements placed in Saskatchewan newspapers were scrutinized to identify the advertisements that indicated a willingness to accept relevant experience in lieu of specific credentials. Employers from throughout the province, representing small and medium sized companies, were selected for the survey. A formal survey instrument was used to collect consistent information from all surveyed employers. The list of the employers who were surveyed can be found in Appendix 2.

#### [1.2.7 Data Analysis](#)

The results of all of data collection processes were analyzed for common themes, areas of service need and reviewed to determine appropriate actions for

the RCG, the Ministry of Advanced Education Employment and Labour, and other related stakeholders to consider.

### 1.2.8 Future Planning, Recommendations and Blueprint for Action

On the basis of the research results and the data analysis, a set of recommendations have been developed. These recommendations form the foundation of a 'Blueprint for Future Action'.

## **2.0 RPL IN SASKATCHEWAN**

### 2.1 The Provincial Policy Framework

In June, 2004, the Minister of Learning approved a Provincial Policy Framework outlining an Action Plan for the advancement of RPL programs and services in Saskatchewan. The RPL Coordinating Group (RCG, made up of business, labour, professional bodies, educators, community organizations and government) were tasked with the responsibility to coordinate and monitor the implementation of the Framework. The Policy Framework was structured around a common vision statement and a set of specific, action oriented, goals.

**Vision:** Saskatchewan's education and training sector, professional/ trade associations, regulatory bodies, government, industry (business and labour) and communities work collaboratively to promote and support the recognition of *all* learning, contributing to the development of a skilled, flexible, and responsive labour force, making Saskatchewan an ideal place to live and work. All learning is valued because it contributes to the social and economic well-being and growth of individuals and our communities.

**Goals and Actions:** Each goal has a set of action plans that when completed, will contribute to the achievement of the goal. Action plans have identified stakeholders who will take a leadership role in completing the plan. Actions are divided into the following three broad-based goals.

- ◆ Demonstrate leadership
- ◆ Deliver high quality, accessible and relevant RPL services in Saskatchewan.
- ◆ Demonstrate Accountability

Each year the RCG prepares an Annual Report which outlines progress on specific actions and highlights the accomplishments towards achieving the goals outlined in the Provincial Framework.

## [2.2 RPL and the Saskatchewan Labour Market](#)

Saskatchewan, along with many other Canadian jurisdictions, is experiencing the effects of recent and dramatic labour shortages. The consequences of this labour shortage have a direct impact on the ability of the province to respond to emerging business growth and community development opportunities. Without a qualified and skilled labour force, Saskatchewan will be unable to take full advantage of the promising economic prosperity materializing within the current provincial economy.

In recent years and months, the provincial government has placed a strong emphasis on the implementation of programs and services designed to expand the pool of qualified, skilled labour. Saskatchewan has established ambitious immigration targets for 2008<sup>9</sup>. In recent years, a strong focus has been placed on enhancing Aboriginal work and education initiatives through programs such as the Aboriginal Employment Development Program<sup>10</sup>. Initiatives to increase the role of Older Workers<sup>11</sup> and to attract workers from other jurisdictions have also been launched.<sup>12</sup> Customized training programs in fields of construction, healthcare, tourism and other industry sectors have also been initiated to increase the quality and number of potential employees.

Many of the responses to the labour shortage are designed to attract new entrants to the province and/or to seek out individuals who have formal education and qualification. However, another valuable tool to enhance the provincial labour force is to implement a process to Recognize Prior Learning

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9 "[Province Sets Aggressive New Immigration Targets](#)", Saskatchewan Government News Release, April 25, 2008. The Immigration target of 2,800 nominations for the 2008-09 fiscal year represents over 7,500 newcomers, over and above those individuals who immigrate through federal programs. The target is an 85 per cent increase over the 2007-08 target of 1,500, which was surpassed with 1,692 immigrants nominated.

10 [The Aboriginal Employment Development Program](#) (AEDP) was developed in 1992 as a response to the changing needs of the Aboriginal population. The Program is designed to take a multilateral, pro-active, integrated and focused approach to promote Aboriginal training and employment in Saskatchewan. The AEDP focuses on working with employers to identify employment needs and remove existing barriers to Aboriginal employment in the workplace.

11 The [Targeted Initiative for Older Workers](#) (TIOW) is a federal/provincial program designed to deliver programming to help older workers reintegrate into the workforce.

12 "[Help Wanted: Saskatchewan Makes Pitch for Skilled Workers](#)", CBC News, October 3, 2008. The provincial government participated in a Toronto area job fair to attract skilled workers to Saskatchewan

(RPL). RPL processes assist individuals to identify their knowledge, skills and abilities so that they can access work, advance in their careers and seek education and training. Future job-seekers, current workers and Saskatchewan employers can utilize RPL tools to increase the number of people eligible for employment opportunities and assist in the human resource planning efforts of Saskatchewan companies.

### 2.3 The Benefits of RPL in Saskatchewan

According to the Report, “Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians”<sup>13</sup>, more than 70% of all new jobs created in Canada will require some form of post-secondary education and 25% of new jobs will require a university degree. A small proportion of jobs (6%) will be held by individuals who have not completed a high school diploma. There are many adult learners who have significant experiential and on-the-job skills and abilities that can be assessed and documented, allowing them to advance their personal training and to qualify for more advanced employment positions. More than half of all Canadians and even greater numbers of the employed would be more likely to enroll in adult education if their previous informal learning were recognized.<sup>14</sup> More than two-thirds of racial minorities, recent immigrants and young school dropouts express a high interest in enrolment in adult education and training, if their prior informal learning was recognized.<sup>15</sup>

In Saskatchewan, where there is a significant shortage of available, skilled labour, there is a need to ensure that individuals have ready access to employment as well as to further training and education. It is important to maximize each individual’s ability to utilize their skills and abilities. It is also important to ensure that people are not required to repeat or duplicate the learning that they already have acquired. The size of the labour force in Saskatchewan is expected to peak between 2008 and 2013. Employers will need to look beyond the traditional labour supply and find ways of attracting and retaining workers with a variety of backgrounds and experiences, including First Nations, Métis, immigrants and refugees.<sup>16</sup>

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13 Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians, Human Resources and Services Development Canada, Government of Canada, 2002.

14 D.W.Livingstone, M.Raykov and C. Turner; Canadian Adults’ Interest in Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR): A National Survey, 2005

15 Ibid

16 Recognizing Prior Learning in Saskatchewan, Provincial Policy Framework, Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour

The RPL assessment process provides a number of potential benefits to learners, workers, job-seekers and employers in Saskatchewan. Some of the benefits of a well-developed RPL process are as follows:

- ◆ RPL identifies the skills and abilities that an individual can apply to a work situation creating greater access to employment opportunities;
- ◆ RPL identifies individual training gaps and provides an opportunity to plan for future training and education to address these gaps;
- ◆ RPL supports the transfer of learned skills and abilities from one workplace and/or educational institution to another;
- ◆ RPL avoids duplication of training, focusing the individual and business investment of both time and money on the acquisition of new skills and knowledge; and
- ◆ RPL enhances personal understanding and self-confidence.

The current labour pool in Saskatchewan can be expanded and enhanced by recognizing the importance of essential skills and by placing value on competency-based learning.<sup>17</sup>

In addition, RPL services and programming can provide opportunity for personal growth and development. RPL supports the recognition of competencies, skills and attitudes, giving credence to the individual's personal abilities. Application of RPL can be used as a tool to empower individuals as they work to achieve their personal goals and objectives.

#### [2.4 RPL Services in Saskatchewan](#)

Programs and services related to RPL have been provided in Saskatchewan since the early 1990s in Saskatchewan. There is a nucleus of researchers, practitioners and industry stakeholders who have a strong understanding and awareness of RPL practices, although this group is relatively small. Today, there remains a large percentage of educators, employers, industry associations, and

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<sup>17</sup> A 'competency' is the application of skills and knowledge relative to an industry standard. Competency-based learning is a method of study that focuses on what a person can actually do as a result of training. Competency-based learning represents a shift from certification and grades to an industry standard of practice.

government stakeholders who do not have a good understanding of RPL. As a result, there continues to be a significant need for awareness building and education regarding the practical application of prior learning assessment and recognition.

Appendix 3 of this document provides a short synopsis of the most developed RPL programs and services in the province of Saskatchewan.

### **3.0 TARGET MARKETS FOR RPL SERVICES**

There are several important market segments to target in Saskatchewan for the development of programs and services relevant to RPL. Each of these target markets has unique needs for RPL programming, as well as specific areas of commonality. For the purposes of this needs assessment, the target audience for RPL programs and services has been divided into three segments; RPL practitioners, individual learners and job-seekers and industry.

*RPL practitioners* are individuals who provide programs and services to learners, employees, job-seekers and employers. In addition, the practitioner target group provides career guidance, counseling and workplace human resource supports. Practitioners are typically employed by education and training institutions such as the universities, technical institutions, regional colleges, public education institutions and non-governmental organizations. A smaller number of RPL practitioners work in sector specific organizations such as the healthcare and tourism sectors. In addition, there are a number of educational institutions, employment agencies, workplace associations, and individuals who use, research and promote Recognizing Prior Learning tools and processes. Individuals involved in these activities can all be considered to be part of the practitioner target audience.

*Individuals* who seek to have their knowledge, skills and abilities assessed and recognized can be classified into distinct categories. Some people want to use a prior learning assessment to *advance their education and training*. These adult learners are seeking to identify what skills and abilities they have already acquired through their prior training and education and through their practical experiences. They want to seek credit for this learning so that they can plan for future education and training. The RPL assessment provides a process to determine where their education and training gaps are. Future education plans can be developed with a goal to fill these gaps and work towards more formal certification of their knowledge, skills and abilities. In some cases, this requires

the transfer of credentials and qualifications from other jurisdictions. In other cases, it requires that an individual provide documentation and proof that they have acquired certain competencies and learned skills. Academic course work can be challenged through formal testing, portfolio assessment and through references and interviews.

Other individuals want to document their knowledge, skills and abilities to *enhance their ability to apply for work and to advance their careers*. Job-seekers and existing employees use RPL tools and services in order to have their prior learning and experience assessed so that they can move forward in their employment and career aspirations. For some, they need to document their skills so that they can access new employment opportunities. For others, RPL tools can assist in identifying skills and abilities that will allow for career growth and development. The increasing emphasis on essential skills and common competencies from entry level through to management reflect the trend toward greater mobility within the workforce and the importance of individuals being able to identify transferable skills.<sup>18</sup> Helping employees to build a career within a company is one of the strategies through which corporations can retain individuals for a longer period.<sup>19</sup>

There are also individuals who can use RPL tools, such as portfolio development, to enhance personal attributes. RPL can serve to build self esteem, self awareness and overall personal confidence. Individuals with well developed personal skills have the potential to make greater contributions to their community and to their work.

Within the target group of individuals in Saskatchewan who are seeking to have their knowledge skills and abilities recognized are two additional and important subsets. There are a significant number of *Aboriginal people* who have not followed a traditional educational path. Many have left formal schooling early and have a need to document the knowledge, skills and abilities that they have acquired through practical work and life experiences. There are also a growing number of new Canadians and refugees that need to access RPL tools and services to assist them to demonstrate the skills and abilities that they have acquired outside of Canada. The expanding *immigrant population* in Saskatchewan provides a significant target market for RPL programs and services.

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18 Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) and Career Development Integrated Efforts: Needs and Opportunities, Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA), August 2007, page 13

19 Ibid

Finally, a significant target market for RPL programs and services are the *employers and employees* of Saskatchewan. Employers are seeking ways to effectively recruit and retain qualified, skilled employees. RPL tools can be of assistance to employers and industry groups. Reliably assessing and recognizing the knowledge, skills and abilities of individual job-seekers can expand the number of individuals available for employment. Employees, currently working in a company or organization within the province, want to be able to access RPL tools to document their prior learning and experience so that they can advance their career goals and fully utilize their skills. For example, someone who wants to move into a management position may want to document their skills and abilities to confirm their ability to address the competencies required in the new employment position. Advancing within the company/industry, or career laddering, can benefit by using RPL tools and processes.

## **4.0 THE NEED FOR RPL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

To identify the program and service needs of each of the target markets identified in Chapter 3.0 (practitioners, individual learners and job-seekers and industry), a literature review and a series of targeted interviews/ surveys have been conducted. The results of these research activities provide the rationale for the development of future recommendations, which in turn, form the basis of a development strategy and a blueprint for action. The RPL programming and service needs for each of the target audience groups are discussed in the following section of the report.

### **4.1 RPL Practitioners**

The Practitioner target group is defined as those individuals who provide RPL services (PLAR, credit transfer, qualification recognition and assessment of prior learning) and support programming for learners, job-seekers, employees, and employers in Saskatchewan. Practitioners also include the group of individuals who provide career advice and counseling within educational institutions, employment agencies, companies, industry groups and in community-based organizations.

There is an increasing level of attention being paid to appropriate ways to prepare and support practitioners. Practitioners must be prepared to provide a high standard of RPL services to those who want to have their prior learning and experience assessed and recognized. For example, the Canadian Association for

Prior Learning (CAPLA) is currently leading an effort to identify and establish national standards for the field. The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL) promotes adequate training and continued professional development for all practitioners who work in the area of RPL and PLAR service provision.

There are a growing number of training programs for individuals involved with, and responsible for, RPL and PLAR programming. From the CAEL program in the United States, to the SIAST Certified Practitioner Program in Saskatchewan; and, from the Halifax PLA Centre's capacity building and certification program to the on-line program offered by Red River College in Manitoba; there are many options available to individuals who want to learn more about RPL.

Given the core principles central to RPL in all its forms, as well as the diverse backgrounds and qualifications of those now working in the field, it will remain a challenge to maintain accessibility and openness while at the same time encouraging high-quality level service and performance. Practitioners recognize their need to remain current and to learn from each other's experiences.

A significant number of the RPL practitioners in Saskatchewan work within education and/or training institutions such as SIAST, the Universities and the Regional Colleges. Typically, these practitioners are involved with three aspects of RPL programming; credit transfer issues; qualification recognition; and prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR). Definitions of each of these areas of RPL programming are found on the Government of Saskatchewan's RPL Website.<sup>20</sup>

- ◆ **Credit Transfer (CT)** is defined as the process by which credit is granted towards a credential by one institution, for programs or courses previously completed at a recognized institution.
- ◆ **Qualification Recognition (QR)** practices involve the fair, credible, and standardized assessment of credentials to assist employers, educational institutions and professional regulatory bodies in making informed decisions.
- ◆ **Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)** is a systematic process that assesses and recognizes an individual's knowledge and skills regardless of where or how the learning was acquired.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.aeel.gov.sk.ca/rpl/>

The work of RPL practitioners who are working with learners to transfer their learning/credits from one institution to another, or who are assessing qualification recognition, is guided by provincial and national Articulation Committees. Articulation Committees have been established to assess curriculum and course content in a particular discipline, in order to determine how the programming of one university or college can effectively be transferred to another.

Credit transfers between credit granting institutions (Saskatchewan's two universities and SIAST) can be obtained more readily today than in the past, and agreements between universities and other institutions are increasing. The Saskatchewan Council for Admissions and Transfer (SaskCAT)<sup>21</sup> is working to increase transfer agreements between the universities and training institutions in Canada.<sup>22</sup> Articulation agreements are already in place between the universities and the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) as well as the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT), in areas such as business, nursing, integrated resource management, chemical technology, computer science, and administration. The province has developed an online Transfer Credit Guide, available through SaskCAT, to provide up-to-date information and transfer status of articulated courses and programs among provincial institutions.

Although there is a developed process for provincial and inter provincial transfers, a greater challenge exists in applying these formal systems to the experience and learning acquired by internationally trained students. It is often difficult to make a direct correlation between the course content of a non-Canadian university and a Canadian university or college. This causes some frustration and confusion for students who are transferring credits into provincial educational institutions from international jurisdictions. However, many internationally trained students have successfully had courses and learning recognized. For example, several international students have successfully challenged courses at SIAST utilizing a PLAR process.

Saskatchewan universities and technical institutions (SIAST) have each established their own PLAR processes and procedures. Each institution has a policy to implement the recognition of prior learning in a prescribed number of

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21 SaskCAT is a partnership of institutions and organizations from Saskatchewan's education system. It is committed to enhancing student mobility by maximizing the portability of educational credits and facilitating access to post-secondary programs and institutions. SaskCAT operates as a committee of Campus Saskatchewan. <http://www.SaskCAT.ca/>

22 Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, <http://www.cicic.ca>

courses and fields of study. Although the universities in Saskatchewan have implemented PLAR procedures, they provide RPL opportunities to a very limited number of courses and programs of study. Bonnie Kennedy, an RPL researcher and practitioner, reports that “although inroads have been made in certain [Canadian] colleges and departments (i.e. nursing, human resources training) for the most part, traditional classroom training is still considered to be the type of learning that counts the most, with uncredentialed knowledge, skills and abilities facing huge attitudinal, structural and financial barriers.”<sup>23</sup>

In Saskatchewan, SIAST has the most developed and advanced RPL programs and services, with a significant number of the courses at the college identified as being PLAR ready. Approximately 1,000 course challenges occur each year at SIAST. The college uses formal testing, portfolios and interviews to complete the prior learning assessment. A number of SIAST graduates, interviewed for this research project, reported that the PLAR process was very effective in assisting them to complete their course of study.

Utilizing RPL programming at the university and college level is advantageous to both the student and the institution. There are a growing number of adult learners who are seeking opportunities to access further education, after they have gained work and practical experience. In addition, the enrollment numbers in Canadian universities has increased over the past several years, primarily due to the influx of international students.<sup>24</sup> The growing number of foreign students, along with the increased number of adult learners, will require a greater degree of RPL programs and services in the future.

Angie Wong, in her ‘PLAR Guide for University Faculty and Administrators’ outlines some of the most significant benefits that can be achieved through the establishment of PLAR programming. The benefits are accrued to students, faculty, and to the institution itself.

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23 Kennedy, Bonnie, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Canada. Thoughts for Today – Hopes for Tomorrow, The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL), 2006

24 A record 70,000 students from other countries enrolled in programs at Canadian universities in 2003/04, up 16.8% from the previous year, and a total of 75,200 students from other countries enrolled in Canadian Universities in 2005, up 7.3 percent from the previous year. International students now represent 7.4 percent of total registrations. Statistics Canada.

- ◆ Enrollment of new students at a range of levels to replace gaps in class numbers created by attrition;
- ◆ Acceleration of graduation rates as a result of reducing duplication of learning and more appropriate placement in programs;
- ◆ Retention of control over program quality by systematically assessing the applicant's prior learning;
- ◆ Enhancement of faculty interest in curriculum development through their involvement in the clarification of academic standards and expected learning outcomes;
- ◆ Enhancement of faculty discussion across disciplines through participation in faculty development workshops (in PLAR procedures);
- ◆ Enhancement of the institution's image through a public perception of responsiveness to the needs of students with job and family responsibilities;
- ◆ Enhancement of public awareness of what universities do and what they can offer;
- ◆ Streamlining of administrative procedures for the recognition of prior learning, which can potentially enhance student services overall;
- ◆ Liaison with industry and other educational providers, which may lead to mutually beneficial relationships; and
- ◆ Liaison with industry, which may lead to research opportunities.<sup>25</sup>

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25 Wong, Angelina T., Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition, A Guide for University and Administrators, University of Saskatchewan, Extension Division, 1999

### *Identified Needs for Practitioners*

During key informant interviews with practitioners, through discussions with learners and through the review of relevant literature, the needs of practitioners were identified. The following outlines the programs and services that practitioners would like to have available to support their work.

The most commonly identified need was for human and financial resources to be applied to initiatives that would raise the awareness of RPL processes and procedures. The effectiveness and benefits that can be derived from the implementation of RPL policies and procedures cannot be fully realized without a concerted effort placed on raising overall awareness. Students and adult learners also reported that a greater emphasis was needed on creating awareness amongst those who could benefit from the application of RPL. Many learners reported that they knew nothing of the RPL option until they met with an academic advisor. Practitioners reported that there was a strong need to invest in awareness building and suggested that the Saskatchewan Association of Human Resource Professionals (SAHRP) could provide a hub to disseminate information on RPL tools and procedures.

For those practitioners who are working with regulatory bodies there is a need to raise awareness and acceptance of RPL as a beneficial tool to assess the knowledge, skills and abilities of new entrants to professions, particularly from foreign countries. Credential and Qualification Recognition have been very slow to advance in some professional associations in the province and in Canada.

Practitioners also identified a need for a forum to share research, best practices and RPL tools with their colleagues. Approximately half of the practitioners indicated that they would support a physical RPL Centre which could serve as a resource centre where practitioners could go to access information, programming support and RPL tools. All practitioners supported the concept of a website that could be used as a tool to network, share and learn from one another. There are a number of websites that are available to practitioners currently. A Saskatchewan website should build on these sites and provide a customized resource for people who are working in the province. A newsletter, website and/or conference on the topic of RPL and its value as a business and personal development tool, are seen as valuable awareness building strategies.

In recent years, there are an increased number of RPL practitioners working as career counselors, advisors and human resource professionals. Many of these practitioners are employed with community-based organizations and with large companies that have human resource departments. These practitioners are primarily concerned with how RPL tools can be used to grow and develop the provincial workforce. For the majority of human resource practitioners involved in RPL, their greatest interest is in understanding how to incorporate portfolios<sup>26</sup>, resumes, interviews, and other HR tools into processes designed to recruit, retain and reward the human resources within a company.

Practitioners involved in human resource management and planning indicated that they require a source for more RPL information and tools. RPL practitioners who are working in private sector companies and in community-based organizations want to improve the employment opportunities for potential employees (job-seekers) and to advance the careers of a company's existing employees through pro-active training gap analysis and future training plans.

Several of the private company representatives interviewed for this research, have spent a significant amount of time creating customized resources that are being used within their own company. Most indicated a willingness to share the tools that they have developed in order to build on existing effort, rather than recreating tools and materials for each individual company. However, company representatives were quick to add that they would not be willing to share information that would negatively influence their competitive advantage to use RPL to recruit and retain existing resources. Saskatchewan's labour market is a very competitive one and some see their RPL processes as tools that make their company more competitive in the labour market.

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26 A portfolio is a collection of information that demonstrates the depth and breadth of what a learner knows and can do. Portfolios document non-formal learning achieved through uncredentialed experiences. The process of writing a portfolio is developmental; it can lead to a deeper understanding of personal strengths and weaknesses and assist the learner in prioritizing goals and objectives. (Angela Wong)

### *Summary Practitioner*

*Practitioners identified the need for services to support networking, access to research and to share best practices, tools and programming with one another. Practitioners reported a desire to learn from others who are working with RPL tools and methods. Practitioners identify the need for a network and a venue to share RPL best practices, processes and procedures.*

*Several practitioners reported a need to better understand the RPL tools that are currently available. Tools are needed to support their work in the assessment of prior learning, the use of competency profiles, to advance interviewing techniques and to utilize other human resource management supports to recognize and document prior learning.*

*Practitioners working with sector associations and employers want broad-based human resource management tools to assist in recruitment, retention and advancement of employees.*

*Key Informant Interviewees supported the need for a website, and to a lesser degree supported the concept of a physical Centre to support networking, individual service needs (recognizing, assessing and documenting prior learning) and industry needs. Practitioners were the only target group that identified the need for a stand-alone physical RPL Centre.*

## 4.2 Adult Learners and Current Employees

Learning has traditionally been associated with the classroom and a 'school-based' environment. RPL embraces a broader scope of learning including on-the-job training, self-directed learning, informal workshops and seminars, learning through volunteer work and learning achieved through the everyday activity of living. Adult learners are typically those who have achieved some level of formal education during their childhood years, who have acquired a set of experiences and knowledge from their practical day-to-day activities and work, and are returning to a learning environment as adults.

Some adult learners have a significant amount of formal learning having achieved graduation with a diploma or degree or professional certification, while others left their formal school experience before acquiring a diploma or certificate. Regardless of the formal learning history, there is value in

recognizing the learning that has been acquired through practical, on-the-job and informal training.

Not recognizing whole aspects of the learning process, just because it has not been completed in a school setting, is costly to our society. Bloom and Grant, in a study completed for the Conference Board of Canada, make reference to the economic loss that can be attributed to our inability to successfully recognize prior learning.

“Globalization, demographic changes, competition among nations for skilled people, and the emergence of large-scale knowledge-based industries have made it more important than ever for Canada to make the most of the knowledge and skills of its people. Non-recognition of learning is a major cost to Canada and Canadians today; tomorrow, recognition of learning can be a major economic gain – if we get it right. If we succeed, our businesses can become more productive and competitive, and our people will earn more and enjoy a higher standard of living.”  
*[Consider the following:]*

- With recognition for learning and learning credentials, there would be an increase in Canadian’s income totaling \$4.1 to \$5.9 billion annually;
- More than 540,000 individuals would gain an average of \$8,000 - \$12,000 each year from improved learning recognition; and
- Three groups would particularly benefit: immigrants, people with prior learning through work and training and transferees between postsecondary institutions or licensed occupations between provinces.<sup>27</sup>

### *Identified Needs*

To better understand the needs of adult learners, ten (10) learners with past RPL/PLAR experience were consulted. A focus group was convened in Saskatoon (6) and a series of individual interviews (4) were conducted with adult learners from other parts of the province. Each had used an RPL or PLAR service in their education and training experience. Learners had enrolled with

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<sup>27</sup> Bloom, M. and M. Grant, Brain Gain: The Economic Benefits of Recognizing Prior Learning and Learning Credentials in Canada, 2006, Conference Board of Canada, p. 34

one of the following: SIAST, the University of Regina, the University of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council (STEC).

### *Awareness of RPL and PLAR*

Learners were asked how they had learned about RPL/PLAR. The majority of the learners reported that they were informed about the potential to use PLAR by a career counselor or advisor, underlying the importance of incorporating career advisors' needs as part of the practitioner target group. Individuals were advised to challenge for a course credit on the basis of the past work experience that they had. Without the individual intervention from an advisor, the learners would not have been aware of the PLAR options that were available to them. Additionally, two of the learners consulted had learned more about RPL from a website. All of the learners felt that there was a need for greater awareness and an effort was needed to inform learners about the potential to use RPL tools to advance their education.

Learners reported that once they were made aware of the PLAR option, they had to make a conscious decision about whether to proceed. Using a PLAR procedure can be time consuming and costly. Some considered it to be just as time efficient and cost effective to enroll in the course rather than to pay for the assessment and to go to the effort of preparing the challenge documentation. By using PLAR, it allowed the learner to take other classes that were needed and to graduate earlier from the program that they were enrolled. PLAR is of particular value to those students who have to travel a significant distance to take a course. If it is possible to receive credit for the course, without having to travel to the lectures, then the investment of time and money is considered to be worthwhile.

Overall, the learners felt that there was a low level of awareness, both amongst the students/learners who wanted to use the process, and with the teachers/professors who need to administer the process. More awareness building efforts are needed.

### *Support for Learners Using RPL/PLAR*

The PLAR process is described as a rigorous one. This is seen as both positive and negative. It is important that the integrity of academic credit not be compromised and that the professional standards of educational and training institutions remain high. At the same time, the process must be transparent, equitable and accessible. Learners understood that the RPL process needs to

have standards and may be demanding however, wherever possible, making the process simple and straightforward would be advantageous.

For many, RPL and PLAR are not readily accessible due to inherent cultural and language barriers. For some, the process of documenting and profiling one's past experience and knowledge can be seen as 'bragging and boastful'. This is unacceptable in certain cultures. In addition, preparing challenge documentation is difficult for individuals who do not have English as their first language. These challenges need to be overcome in order for the RPL process to be available to all learners who want to use the process.

Support is needed for some adult learners who are returning to their studies after having been out of formal education for a significant period of time; for those who do not have a strong background in the English language; and, for others that have limited experience with formal education; support is needed to effectively utilize RPL tools. For these individuals, a hands-on, physical service is necessary to support their RPL needs. One-on-one support is needed, rather than support provided electronically or through print materials. Individuals who need personal interaction would be able to ask questions, utilize a lab with computers, review information handouts, use a reference library, attend classes and seminars in portfolio learning, seek resume and interview preparation support, etc. The Adult learners that were consulted felt that existing employment centres, community settlement centres and other existing facilities could be used to support RPL service provision.

### *Employer Acceptance and Employee Advancement*

In the learner's opinion, RPL processes have received a mixed response from employers. Many employers continue to require formal education and certification as prerequisites for certain types of employment or to advance in their career. These employers are not willing to consider work experience in lieu of credentials. The adult learners consulted for this research indicated that their PLAR experience assisted them to get credentials and to graduate from a formal program. For the most part, their employer was unaware that they had not taken all of the coursework for their degree, diploma or certification in a traditional way. The certification outcome was the important factor.

Some employers support using RPL and PLAR techniques once an individual is already employed with the company. They support the idea that an individual can advance their training and education through RPL, and are

willing to compensate and advance the employee once the training has led to certification and graduation.

Most employers are not familiar with the employment 'portfolio' as a tool to access employment. If this tool is to be used more extensively in future, some awareness building will be needed to support the employer as they learn how to assess the knowledge, skills and abilities that are profiled in an employment portfolio.

Learners report that employers are becoming more flexible as the labour market tightens. There continues to be a need for awareness building as most employers do not understand how RPL programs and services could be valuable and useful to their business.

*In Canada, research shows that rates of adult participation in education and training activities have stagnated. Those who most need learning opportunities are, ironically, the least likely to obtain them. All of this is occurring against a backdrop that includes an aging workforce, skills shortages and an increasingly competitive and demanding workplace.<sup>28</sup>*

Given the current shortage of qualified labour in Saskatchewan, there is strong support for any effort that will result in a larger number of people having access to training that will improve their capacity to work. As a result, there are more adults who are seeking the opportunity to advance their learning. However, as noted earlier in this report, adult learners are more likely to enroll in education and training opportunities when they feel that the value of their prior learning has been acknowledged.

There is a need to build awareness of the value of RPL as a technique to recruit and retain employees through recognizing prior learning and planning for future learning. The new 'model of work' supports the concept of life-long learning and rewards all types of learning that can be effectively and efficiently applied to a rapidly changing workforce.

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28 State of Learning in Canada: Toward a Learning Future, Canadian Council on Learning, 2008

### *Summary Adult Learner Needs*

*Adult learners report that there is a need to improve awareness of RPL tools and procedures amongst learners, educators and employers. Although some learners have the potential to learn how to access and use RPL programs and services through electronic websites, there are a large number of individuals with low levels of formal education, language barriers and limited experience with formal education procedures that will need one-on-one support to assist them to use RPL tools effectively. Employers need to understand the value of RPL as a tool for recruitment, retention and reward. A greater understanding will support the adult learner's desire to pursue formal education and training to enhance their career and lifestyle.*

### 4.3 Job Seekers

The unemployment rate in Saskatchewan is the lowest in Canada at 3.6%.<sup>29</sup> According to Statistics Canada data, there were 522,500 people working in Saskatchewan in September 2008 - an increase of 18,100 jobs from September 2007. Employment among women increased 4.6%, up 10,600 jobs, 4.7% or 4,100 for young people, and 7.6% or 2,500 jobs for off-reserve First Nations and Métis people.<sup>30</sup>

These job creation and unemployment figures suggest that there are a relatively small number of individuals who are actively looking for work in the province. This is supported by the fact that employers report that they experience increasing difficulty in recruiting employees to fill employment positions. Many employers say that they have to leave positions unfilled for long periods of time while they search for qualified candidates. This is particularly true for employers in rural communities in Saskatchewan. Although there has been an increase in overall population in the province, and the province is actively seeking to increase the number of prospective employees through immigration, job fairs and other initiatives, there remains a significant shortage of labour in Saskatchewan.

Even with significant employment opportunity available, there continues to be a small group of job-seekers who have had difficulty making a successful

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<sup>29</sup> Saskatchewan Leading Nation in Job Growth and Lowest Unemployment Rate, Saskatchewan Government News Release, October 10, 2008

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

attachment to the labour market. Some of these job-seekers struggle with literacy issues, health-related concerns, physical and cognitive disabilities and/or limited education and job experience. It is possible to support this group of job-seekers through RPL programming and services. Individuals can utilize RPL tools (Prior Learning Assessment, Portfolio Development, Qualification Recognition, etc.) to identify and document their existing knowledge, skills, abilities and attitudes, as well as to identify their skill and ability gaps. With this understanding, an individual future training plan and career plan can be developed.

In the mid-1990's, Saskatchewan established a network of employment centres throughout the province, as part of its Labour Market Partnership Agreement with the Government of Canada.<sup>31</sup> (The Agreement was renewed in 2005.) Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Service (CSCES) Centres provide employment services to both job-seekers and employers. A broad range of career and employment services are offered to all Saskatchewan residents. The Centres support individuals who want to learn the necessary skills to find employment and help to match the abilities of potential workers with the needs of Saskatchewan employers.

Job-seekers use the existing CSCES offices to support their job-search and training needs. It is logical therefore, to extend the services of the CSCES offices to include RPL support. In order to provide RPL programming and service, it will be necessary to ensure that an individual, or group of individuals, within the CSCES offices have knowledge of RPL processes. CSCES can either offer RPL services to job-seekers and employers directly, or contract with other service providing agencies to deliver RPL support.

### Identified Needs

The adult learners who participated in the focus group session and/or were interviewed by telephone were asked to comment on the needs of job-seekers and employees. In addition, the Key Informant interviews provided suggestions as to how the needs of Job-Seekers and employees could be supported.

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31 Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Service Centres operate under the Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Labour fulfilling the employment service mandate under the Canada-Saskatchewan Labour Market Partnership Agreement. Can-Sask offices are located in the following Saskatchewan communities: Creighton, Estevan, Fort Qu'Appelle, Humboldt, Ile a la Crosse, Kindersley, Laronge, Lloydminster, Meadow Lake, Melfort, Moose Jaw, Nipawin, North Battleford, Prince Albert, Regina, Saskatoon, Swift Current, Weyburn, Wynyard and Yorkton.

### Awareness

There is a general lack of awareness about RPL and PLAR. Job-seekers who have multiple barriers and/or who have had difficulty making a successful attachment to the labour market are not aware of the value of PRL processes, portfolio development and the recognition of prior learning and experience. Individuals who are providing service and support to this group of job-seekers (CanSask Career and Employment Services, Regional Colleges, Aboriginal Colleges and Training Institutions, etc.) are also unaware of the tools that are available to them through RPL. Awareness building efforts are needed to increase access to, and use of, RPL tools by all of the support agencies involved with assisting job-seekers and current employees who are seeking to advance their careers.

### Literacy Supports

About 40% of adults in Saskatchewan have below what is considered the minimum level (Level 3) of literacy proficiency needed to maintain their lives, grow, and achieve their goals in our ever-changing society.<sup>32</sup> Currently, approximately 7,000 adults with low literacy levels are being helped with existing programming in Saskatchewan.<sup>33</sup> There is obviously a significant shortfall in the programming and service that is being provided. It is safe to assume that literacy concerns are relevant to many of the individual job-seekers who are having difficulty acquiring successful employment positions. As a result, there is a need to develop a literacy training plan for Saskatchewan job-seekers experiencing barriers and challenges accessing employment. This includes English Language Training for immigrant and New Canadian families.

“Literacy really matters in every country, for social, political and economic reasons. Countries that ignore the imperative of developing literacy skills to the highest possible levels do so at their own peril.”<sup>34</sup>

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32 Literacy in Saskatchewan; Findings of the IALSS Survey, 2005, The Saskatchewan Literacy Network, the Saskatchewan Aboriginal Literacy Network, and the Saskatchewan Literacy Commission have formed a partnership to develop International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) promotional and informational tools.

Level 3 Literacy Defined – being able to read well enough to cope with every day living and to complete high school.

33 Dyck, Dr. Lillian Eva, Issues and Challenges for Literacy and Education for Aboriginals in Saskatchewan, April, 2007

34 State of Learning in Canada – No Time for Complacency, Canadian Council of Learning, January, 2007

### *Advancing RPL Tools and Portfolio Development*

Job-seekers with employment barriers can benefit from a variety of RPL services, including the process of developing a portfolio of their prior learning and work related experience. The portfolio assists the job-seeker to identify knowledge, skills and abilities that can be applied in the workplace. In addition, the process of preparing a portfolio supports personal development, self-esteem and confidence building. These attributes are important for individuals who are responding to job advertisements and attending job interviews.

For the majority of multi-barriered job-seekers, it is important to have access to one-on-one support. Due to low literacy levels, incomplete formal education and early high school exit, and poor self confidence, these job-seekers are unlikely to successfully and effectively utilize electronic and web-based supports. Barriered job-seekers require the support and advisory services that can be provided through an in-person, one-to-one, or small group, training initiative.

#### *Summary Job-Seeker Needs*

*An RPL website is seen as a useful tool for those that have good language capability and who are comfortable using technology. It is understood however, that there are many people who will need in-person, hands-on RPL services, because their confidence with the English language and electronic tools is not well developed. It is logical for these services to be provided through a known portal such as the Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Service Centres or the provincial regional college network.*

*Job-seekers with multiple employment barriers would benefit from portfolio development opportunities. The establishment of a portfolio development support service will increase job-seeker confidence and self-esteem, while at the same time, document knowledge, skills and abilities that will prepare the individual for the job market.*

*Awareness building is needed with job-seekers, employers and service providers to better understand the role and value of RPL as an employment tool.*

#### 4.4 Aboriginal People

Aboriginal people can be found in the adult learner and job-seeker groups that have been discussed in sections 4.2 and 4.3 of this report. The needs of learners and job-seeker groups also apply to the Aboriginal population in the province. However, there are unique needs and considerations for Aboriginal people as well.

The 2006 Census of Canada documented a total of 141,890 Saskatchewan people who identified that they had some Aboriginal ancestry. This represents 14.88% of the total provincial population. Approximately half of the total Aboriginal population is under the age of 25. About half of the Aboriginal population over the age of 15, do not report having a high school diploma.<sup>35</sup> These statistics outline the need to address and document the learning achievements of Aboriginal people. There is a need to ensure that more Aboriginal youth complete their high school education and that they consider post-secondary training as part of their schooling and employment readiness plan. RPL programming tools can support Aboriginal people to return to their formal education, to access employment opportunities and to achieve personal growth and development in learning environments.

In 2001/02, Saskatchewan Learning, the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board (SLDB) and several secondary institutions co-sponsored four PLAR sessions that focused on issues relevant to Aboriginal people and Aboriginal culture. The purpose of the sessions was to integrate PLAR processes into a model of holistic education, appropriate for Aboriginal learners. Successful RPL programs and services, designed for Aboriginal people, are built on the concept of Holistic Portfolio Learning and Development. Holistic Portfolios emphasize the importance of the whole person and the interdependence of various aspects of the person and their experience.

#### Identified Needs – Holistic Portfolio Learning

Aboriginal learners can benefit from RPL programs and services that focus on Holistic Portfolio Development. The portfolio can be used as a tool to access employment, plan for further training and education and to enhance personal growth and development. A significant amount of research and development work has been completed in other Canadian jurisdictions and at academic institutions that focus on Aboriginal learners. For example, the work done at

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35 Aboriginal Population Profile, 2006 Census of Canada, Statistics Canada

Mohawk College in Ontario has been recognized as having been very successful with the Aboriginal population and with Aboriginal youth. Programs from this college support the use of portfolios as a key component of the RPL process.

Saskatchewan has a number of First Nations and Métis education, training and learning institutions (First Nations University, SIIT, Gabriel Dumont, Duquette High School, etc.). These organizations provide logical venues for RPL programs and services. There is a need to advance RPL services and employment supports for Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan through partnerships between existing Aboriginal service providers and through RPL expertise, both within Saskatchewan and in other jurisdictions of Canada.

### *Summary Aboriginal-Specific Needs*

*RPL programs and services are needed to support Aboriginal learners and job-seekers. The development of holistic portfolios as part of an overall program to advance employment and learning opportunities can be advanced. While portfolios will enhance the ability to document knowledge, skills and abilities and will build self-awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence, it is important to ensure that the RPL process includes programming that will support Aboriginal people in their pursuit of employment opportunities, advanced education and training and improved career advancement within their existing employment positions.*

## 4.5 New Canadians, Refugees and Immigrants

The 2006 Census enumerated 6,186,950 individuals living in Canada but who were born outside of Canada. They represent one in five (19.8%) of the total Canadian population.<sup>36</sup> Saskatchewan's population and community grew and developed on the basis of an influx of immigrants in the early 1900s. People flocked to the province to take advantage of the economic opportunities that were offered through land development and agriculture. The majority of the immigrant population moving to Canada find their homes in Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver. However in recent years, a larger proportion of the immigrants to Canada are making their homes in smaller centres. Saskatchewan is working to increase the immigration numbers. The province has established a target of approximately 3,000 immigrants in 2008/09.

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<sup>36</sup> Immigrant Population Profile, 2006 Census of Canada, Statistics Canada

New Canadians have unique RPL needs. Many individuals come to the country with international learning and training that is difficult to recognize in Canada. RPL programs and services are needed to assist in Qualification Recognition and Certification Recognition.

Many immigrants to Canada struggle to acquire the level of English language that is necessary to successfully participate in the labour market. According to the Regina Open Door Society, there are English as a Second Language (ESL) training opportunities readily available to achieve a level that supports labour-based positions however, more advanced ESL training is needed for professional positions. There is a need for more advanced ESL training (Level 5 – 8) to support immigrants who want to advance their careers and access higher skilled trades and professions.

#### *Summary Immigrant-Specific Needs*

*RPL programs and services are needed to support Immigrant learners and job-seekers. Employment and learning portfolios can be developed to support immigrants to successfully acquire employment and further education opportunities. These portfolios will enhance the individual's ability to document knowledge, skills and abilities and will build self-awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence. This, along with the application of other RPL tools will support immigrants to successfully acquire employment and further education opportunities.*

*Advanced English language training is required to support immigrants who want to pursue education and job opportunities in advanced technical, trade and professional subject areas.*

*Enhanced capacity to recognize the prior learning and experience of internationally trained individuals will ensure that immigrant populations have access to Saskatchewan's labour market in a timely manner.*

#### [4.6 Employers and Business Owners](#)

Employers and business owners represent a significant target audience for RPL services in Saskatchewan. Many employers report that they are having difficulty finding qualified employees. Employers interviewed for this project agree that they are willing to use a variety of tools to improve their success at recruitment and retention of potential workers. If RPL tools and services can

enhance their ability to access a larger pool of employees and can ensure that they are hiring people with the right knowledge, skills and attitudes to effectively do their work, then they are anxious to consider RPL solutions to their workplace challenges.

As part of this RPL Needs Assessment, a significant effort has been made to investigate the needs of Saskatchewan employers. Employers interviewed want to be able to assess and recognize skills and abilities that can be applied to employment positions. This need is reflected both for those positions where an employer is seeking to fill an employment opportunity within the company, and to enhance existing employment positions within the company.

Employers want competent employees. Whether these individuals have the desired certification is often a secondary concern to the need to ensure that the candidates that apply for work “Can do the job”. Many employers interviewed and business owners are willing to consider experience, knowledge and skills in lieu of the formal training, if they can be assured that the individual has the ability to do the work that needs to be done, effectively and proficiently.

#### [4.6.1 Business/Employer Survey](#)

To assess the needs of employers, a survey was conducted with Saskatchewan employers who were willing to consider employment candidates with prior relevant experience, in lieu of credentials. Garven & Associates conducted a search of newspaper advertisements that were placed in local newspapers from July to early September. This search was done to identify the companies that advertised a willingness to accept the relevant experience of employment candidates as a prerequisite to employment. Numerous employers were identified with a total of twenty-seven (27) selected for in-depth survey and interview. Small, medium and large-sized companies participated, representing rural and urban communities from all across Saskatchewan. Both for-profit and not-for-profit companies and organizations were included in the sample. The survey sample provided a good cross-section of Saskatchewan employers. Table 4.1 lists the names of the employers interviewed, their location, size and profit orientation.

**Table 4.1 Survey / Interviews of Saskatchewan Employers**

<b>Company/Agency</b>	<b>Nature of Activity</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Profit Orientation</b>
Profit Systems Inc.	Software developer	Saskatoon	Small	For Profit
Yail Harbour Inc.	Human service program provider	Saskatoon	Small	Not For Profit
Innovation Place	Research park management	Saskatoon	Medium	Crown
Cypress Hills Health District	Health services	Swift Current	Large	Not For Profit
Pioneer Grain	Grain company crop input outlet	Saskatoon	Medium	For Profit
Rail City Industries Inc.	Care home for intellectually disabled persons	Melville	Small	Not For Profit
Sheraton Cavalier Hotel	International hotel chain	Saskatoon	Large	For Profit
Northwest Nations Education Council	First Nations education designed to improve quality of instruction and education in member schools	North Battleford	Small	Not For Profit
Kanawayimik, Child and Family Services	Social service for First Nations	North Battleford	Small	Not For Profit
Kindersley Transport	Transportation company	Saskatoon	Medium	For Profit
Cornerstone Credit	Financial services	Yorkton	Medium	For Profit
Saskatchewan Research Council	Provincial research agency	Saskatoon	Medium	Crown
SCCH Daycare	Daycare/Childcare Facility	Swift Current	Small	Not For Profit
North Battleford Housing Authority	Housing provider to low income seniors and families	North Battleford	Small	Not For Profit
Johnson Controls Inc.	International electric controls company	Regina	Large	For Profit
Rainbow Youth Centre	Social services for aboriginal youth	Regina	Small	Not For Profit
Regina Education and Action on Child Hunger (REACH)	Social service to promote healthy food and good nutrition for disadvantaged persons	Regina	Small	Not For Profit
Travelodge Hotel	International hotel chain	Saskatoon	Large	For Profit
Saskatchewan Abilities Council	Vocational, rehabilitation and recreation agency for adults with disabilities	Swift Current	Medium	Not For Profit
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation	Provincial agency delivering crop insurance to farmers	Melville	Large	Crown
Sakimay First Nation	First Nation band	Grenfell	Medium	Not For Profit

**Interviews with Employers Continued**

Company/Agency	Nature of Activity	Location	Size	Profit Orientation
Northwest Regional College	Regional College	North Battleford	Medium	Not For Profit
YWCA Saskatoon	Advocacy, program and service provider for women and their families	Saskatoon	Medium	Not For Profit
MCK Concrete Access	Concrete supplier	Saskatoon	Small	For Profit
Communications Co-Operative	Cable television supplier	Regina	Large	For Profit
Ramada Hotel	International hotel chain	Regina	Large	For Profit
North Battleford United Way	Charity fund raiser	North Battleford	Small	Not For Profit

The employer needs assessment survey posed a number of questions to assess past employer hiring experiences, current methods used to hire, satisfaction with current assessment results, and opinion on whether a need exists for additional employer services.

### [Employer Recruitment Experience](#)

Employers were asked to identify their past experiences in hiring candidates with the knowledge, skills and attitudes for employment positions within their company. Tables 4.2 and 4.3 report their responses. The responses show that over one-quarter of employers find it very difficult and almost two-thirds report some difficulty in recruiting candidates during the past year. Moreover, 60% of employers often compromise when searching for candidates with the knowledge, skills and attitudes that employers seek.

**Table 4.2 Past Experience Hiring Employees with the Knowledge Skills and Attitudes for the Required Work**

Survey Question	No Difficulty	Some Difficulty	Very Difficult
When you consider the past year, which of the following best describes your experience? . . . "Our company has had _____ recruiting candidates with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to do the required work."	11%	63%	26%

**Table 4.3 Employer Success in Finding Candidates with the Knowledge Skills and Attitudes for the Required Work**

Survey Question	Usually	Often	Rarely Find
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### Compromise

When you consider the past year, which of the following best describes your experience? . . . “Our company can \_\_\_\_\_ find candidates with the knowledge, skills and attitudes for the position we are trying to fill”

40%

60%

0%

### Employer Methods of Assessing Candidates

Employers provided a description of how they currently assess candidates. Each has their own customized approach to their situation. Larger, more complex organizations have a human resource department that provides a more thorough assessment process while smaller agencies have no human resource department support. Table 4.4 provides a description of responses. The responses illustrate a wide variation in level of sophistication and methods used to assess candidates.

**Table 4.4** How do you currently assess candidates’ knowledge, skills and attitudes?

Company/Agency	Response
Yail Harbour Inc.	Not everybody has a rehab certificate but it doesn’t matter. Experience is what is important. There are lots of 40 and 50 year olds with lots of life experiences in them.
Innovation Place	It has been a struggle to find IT candidates at the senior level. Overall, Innovation Place looks for candidates’ alignment of personal values with the corporate values. They do a lot of subjective situational analysis with candidates. They ask the candidates to show them when and if they have done a task before. These key steps are used. 1) Wide net cast to interview as many as possible (11-15 people at 15 minutes). 2) Formal interviews (3-4) with managers present. 3) Second formal interview with peers present. They do not rely on tools very much. They use a behaviour-based assessment approach.
Cypress Hills Health District	An interview panel assigns points to questions answered in an interview. Not always the highest point candidate is hired. The managers determine what education and experience is needed. The HR department will say what it thinks but the manager makes the final decision.
Pioneer Grain	Looking for mechanical ability and some management experience. Always need to compromise when filling operations positions.
Rail City Industries Inc.	Senior staff interview (screen) candidates and then bring good options to the manager for an interview. They assess the quality of the resume because it is an indicator of motivation. Some of the best workers are illiterate. Looks for flexible people that are trainable.
Sheraton Cavalier Hotel	Candidates complete an online personality test to assess strengths and weaknesses. Try to get the candidate to talk a lot in the interview so they can assess ability to communicate. Look for the right attitude and someone who is adaptable. Look for relevant experience.
Northwest National Education Council	The interview team combines their knowledge base. They are familiar with institutions who offer training. They have certain criteria that are required for the candidate to meet. They ask lots of probing questions and looks for a base of knowledge.
Company/Agency	Response
Kanaweyimik Child and Family Services Inc.	Create specific questions for the interview. Then give scenarios and see how the candidate responds. Most jobs require a credential. Only certain jobs like parent-aid or child-aid are available that do not require the credential.

Kindersley Transport Cornerstone Credit	Place the biggest assessment weighting on the interview. 90-95% of the criteria used to hire someone is experience.
Saskatchewan Research Council	They use four (4) steps. The first step is the resume review. Second, does the candidate appear qualified? Assessment written online (provided by the Grasslands Group). The on-line assessment measures word combinations and sequencing skills. It also provides an assessment of attitude. They have found that the on-line previous work experience assessment is very accurate. Existing staff are asked to take the on-line test when they apply for another position. It is a challenge to make the right assessment. Look for experience and skills that are transferable but have found no tool that can assess transferability of experience or skills. Use an interview guide and rate candidates. Previous employment experience is considered. May ask a candidate to demonstrate applied skills. i.e. Communications Position will be given a scenario and asked to prepare a briefing note. SRC also uses sorting tests in the geo-analytical area to demonstrate the candidate's numerical and alphabetic sorting abilities. Provide a test and calculator to some candidates to determine if they can actually do scientific calculations.
SCCH Daycare North Battleford Housing Authority Johnson Controls Inc.	Consider similar lines of work experience. Strong expectation that people with a general education in maintenance will be relevant. They expect to train employees. Do interviews, review resumes and do scenario testing. If two positions are scored similarly, the one with the experience is chosen. Mechanical ability is key. Key manager has a checklist of questions to assess the candidates in the interviews. Use a three-month probationary period technique to see how a candidate performs - essentially test drive the new candidate and expect to train.
Rainbow Youth Centre	It is a laborious and collaborative process. A hiring committee (union member, program coordinator and Executive Director) review resumes and decide who to interview. Use a structured interview guide. What other agencies the candidate has worked for may influence the selection. Three reference checks are made using a structured guide for reference interviews.
Regina Education and Action on Child Hunger (REACH) Travelodge Hotel	Do a resume review and then do an interview. There is a checklist for each job that is gone through during the interview process. Volunteer experience is given a good weight in scoring someone's skills. If a candidate is lacking certain skills, they are willing to train. A standardized process used during interviews which includes a score sheet. No tests are administered. The first step is a resume review. Use criteria for adaptability, creativity and compatibility during the interview process as well as a Behavior Descriptive Indicator.
Saskatchewan Abilities Council (Swift Current) Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation	Resume review and then a behavior-based interview. Candidates to answer a question by giving a specific situation, their action and the results of that action. There are 20 questions in the interview. Competency based approach to staffing. A 100 page manual on SCIC's website that explains their approach to recruiting using a competency-based model. It has been developed in-house at SCIC and adapted from Saskatchewan Public Service Commission information. A comprehensive process is used that includes resume review, selection of resumes for interviews, pre-interview questionnaire, interview stage, testing, probationary period assessment. SCIC has developed its own mathematics and computer skills tests for applicants and asks questions in interviewees that require the candidate to identify a certain past experience or situation and describe how the candidate dealt with the issue. SCIC believes that many applicants are interview-savvy and can know what the correct answer should be for certain interview questions. SCIC interview questions probe deeper and require the candidate to demonstrate or provide an example of how he or she responded to an actual situation sometime in their prior years of experience. Focus on the competencies needed to do a specific job at SCIC. Hard to staff rural positions in some cases (e.g. like IT).
<b>Company/Agency</b>	<b>Response</b>
Sakimay First Nation	Panel does the interview. A structured interview guide is used. Try to maintain eye contact with the individual as a candidate's ability to keep eye contact shows good communication skills. Aware of body language. Some skills tests are used in the area of typing and computer use. Three reference checks are done.

Northwest Regional College	Two people participate in the interview, usually lasts between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours. The first third of the interview is focused on functional, technical aspects of the job. The middle part on the candidate's expectations of the employer. The last third consists of behavioral questions. Identify the critical skills, education, qualifications and knowledge required. Ask the candidate to explain how they are qualified for the job.
YWCA Saskatoon	Begin with identifying the critical skills needed for the position, review applications and if candidates do not have these skills they are weeded out. The interview process is always done by two people, the Team Leader and one other. Behavior-based questions used. May choose to do testing of technical skills (in the computer lab). Seek to understand whether the person has the aptitude to be trained. Most important are communication and interpersonal skills. Always assess the "fit with organizational culture". Three reference checks are done.
MCK Concrete Ltd.	Pre-employment screening which tests industrial skills. Resume review, interview and try to call references before making a decision.
Access Communications Co-operative	Review the resume, looking at previous work experience and education. There is a telephone screening interview and then a face-to-face interview which is done by the Human Resource department and the hiring manager. This is a behavior-based interview. Try to give people a realistic job preview where the candidate has time to observe someone doing that particular job. Software testing is done for administrative positions. They are willing to train. Attitude and aptitude are measured. Reference checks are done.
Ramada Hotel	Two people conduct the interview. Use a structured guide. Assesses the knowledge required for the job, depending on what the candidate will be doing. Experience is the most important thing for them as they do not look at credentials.
North Battleford United Way	There are two parts to the interview: 1) regular questions, 2) scenarios. Interviews done by CEO and 2 board members. Reference checks done, ask to talk to past colleagues.

Employers use interviews, resumes and references as the primary employment assessment tools. Table 4.5 shows the survey results outlining the primary methods used by employers to assess candidates.

<b>Method Used</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Interviews	100%
Testing	37%
Resume	78%
Portfolio	0%
References	89%
Intuition	44%

### *Employer Need for Services*

The wide cross-section of Saskatchewan employers, who participated in the survey are split as to their satisfaction with their decision-making processes.

Almost two-thirds, or 63% were generally satisfied that they make the right assessment. But one-third (33%) believe that they sometimes do not make the right assessment.

A large percentage (81%) indicate that there is a need for a service that could assist employers to learn more about the techniques and tools that could be used to assess a worker's knowledge, skills and attitudes. Table 4.6 summarizes the opinion of employers.

<b>Table 4.6 Employer Opinion on Need for Assistance to Learn More about Tools to Assess Candidates Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes</b>			
<b>Survey Question</b>	<b>Employers Who Identify a Need for Assistance</b>	<b>Employers Who Don't Identify a Need for Assistance</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>
Do you think that there is a need for a service to assist employers to learn more about techniques and tools that could be used to assess a worker's knowledge, skills and attitudes?	81%	11%	8%

### *Employer Interest in Service and Willingness to Pay*

The survey asked employers to rank their level of interest in using a service designed to assist employers in techniques and tools that would assess a candidate's knowledge skills and attitudes. Table 4.7 reports this level of interest on a scale from 1 – 10.

<b>Table 4.7 Level of Interest in Using a Service to Assess Candidates</b>										
<b>Ranking, 1 = Not Interested, 10 = Very Interested</b>										
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Percentage of Employers</b>		4%	4%	5%		11%	30%	26%		22%

Average Ranking of 27 Employers = 7.4

Employers also provided their comments on what they would expect the service to offer them. These comments are as follows:

**Table 4.8**      **What do you expect the service to offer employers?**

Company/Agency	Response
Profit Systems Inc.	They have flown by the seat of their pants. They would like a service that could help them narrow down the candidates to investigate. They do not have an HR department but they need the skills to assess. When 150 new software design engineers come out of SIAST, how do they narrow it down to a smaller group for interviews. Maybe there is a better process than they are using. They may be overlooking good candidates.
Yail Harbour Inc. Innovation Place	Clues and tips and guidance on salary expectations. Would find it useful if a service could provide the rationale and support for front line managers that believe a credential is required when it is not.
Cypress Hills Health District	Needs help assessing out of province courses.
Pioneer Grain	Would like help streamlining the recruiting process. But, supply is the main problem. Advertise for a position and only two candidates applied, who were not acceptable.
Rail City Industries Inc.	Needs something more than gut feel. Wonders if they dig deep enough in interviews. Would like personality tests.
Sheraton Cavalier Hotel	The hospitality industry has lost people to other industries. They are now building resources from within. As employees go into supervisory roles, need help in developing and assessing these people. Four generations of employees are working in the workforce now.
Northwest Nations Education Council	Need: 1) Exploring PLAR and how it can assess prior learning and experience, 2) How to explore and use educational institutions better, 3) Help on situational /scenario testing.
Kanaweyimik Child and Family Services Inc.	1) Workshops are needed on how to interview candidates and on interviewing techniques. 2) How to assess people who are not good at interviews. 3) Methods to weed out people that sound 'too good'. 4) Techniques to ask the right questions to get to the real answer. 5) How to cut through the candidates 'sales pitch' and get to the real info.
Saskatchewan Research Council	Need an assessment of private companies' assessment tools. Needs help in assessing the soft skills (attitude).
North Battleford Housing Authority	Needs to know what questions to ask for different positions like accounting, plumbers, etc.
Rainbow Youth Centre	What are the current practices in HR management in the corporate world? A manual would be useful.
Regina Education and Action on Child Hunger (REACH)	A general toolkit would be useful as would training, models and processes that are cutting edge and innovative. It would be useful to know about ways to think outside the box and still get a good person in the position that needs to be filled.
Travelodge Hotel	Currently have an in-house course which is offered to any employee where they can learn how to place a job ad, interview techniques, read resumes, questions to ask in an interview and how to understand candidates' responses to interview questions. People who take this course are then better prepared to move in to management positions. Interested in a service to enhance what they already have in place.

Company/Agency	Response
Saskatchewan Abilities Council (Swift Current)	Assessment for attitude, problem solving and conflict resolution. Would appreciate assistance in doing reference checks (they currently have a form that is followed).
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation	Assessment tools have been developed in-house. A service could provide access to external tools that may be better.
Sakimay First Nation	More about interview techniques, particularly how to get information from a candidate (getting them to be more open during the interview). How to do thorough background checks.
Northwest Regional College	The do's and don'ts in terms of human rights. Help in formulating questions to get information that they want from a candidate. Needs to be able to identify what is critical in order to fill a position. Knowing this will assist in deciding if an expert is needed, or if someone else can be trained to do the job.
YWCA Saskatoon	The service would need to be easy to use, accessible and have pertinent information. Currently uses a grid to show what skills a candidate has. Would like to know how best to articulate ads and recruitment documents.
MCK Concrete Ltd.	Assistance in pre-screening candidates and to understand the candidates' future goals.
Access Communications Co-operative	Interview tools to assess competency and aptitude for entry-level positions.
Ramada Hotel North Battleford	Guidelines on how to get information out of a candidate – what questions to ask.
United Way	Different ways of interviewing candidates. How to incorporate flexibility in terms of adapting a position to fit the person in that role. Likes the idea of workshops and hands-on activities.

Employers were asked to comment on what would stop them from using such a service. The most common barrier to use is cost (59%) followed by time (41%), and confidence in the service results (19%).

An employer's willingness to pay for a service designed to assist with the assessment of a worker's knowledge, skills and attitudes is reported in Table 4.9.

Survey Question	Yes	No	Don't Know/Depends
When asked, "Do you think that your company/agency would be willing to pay for a service designed to assist with the assessment of a future worker's knowledge, skills and attitudes?"	48%	22%	30%

As a general theme, non-profit agencies found it difficult to justify paying for the service whereas for-profit agencies were willing depending on the service quality and its value.

### Preferred Service Delivery Methods

Employers were asked about their delivery method preference for the service in Saskatchewan. A total of 70% of the employers indicated that they preferred a website, 33% wanted to access the service through business associations, 30% preferred to access an employment office such as the Career and Employment Centres, and 11% wanted to have a specifically dedicated office or Centre. Another 11% indicated that housing the service in an already existing provincial office would be acceptable. Employers were able to select more than one response.

**Table 4.10 Preference for Service/Program Delivery**

<b>Choose All That Are Appropriate</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Website	70%
Existing Employment Office (Can/Sask)	30%
Dedicated Office	11%
Business Association (Chamber, Prof. Assoc.)	33%
Existing Prov. Government Agency (Apprenticeship)	11%
Other (SARC, Tribal Councils, etc.)	19%

Responses total more than 100% as survey respondents were able to choose more than one alternative.

### Using RPL Services for Training Plans

Employers were asked to offer their opinion on whether a service designed to assess prospective workers could also be used to assess and evaluate current staff members in order to develop a training plan. Table 4.11 describes the employer's opinion. The majority of employers support the use of RPL as a tool to assess and document current employee development needs.

**Table 4.11 Using a Service to Develop Training Plans for Current Staff Members**

<b>Survey Question</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not Sure</b>
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“If an assessment service was available and designed to assess a prospective worker’s knowledge, skills and attitudes, do you think that it could also be used to assess and evaluate current staff members in order to develop training plans?”	59%	19%	22%
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Employers reported that a useful, quality tool was needed to assist them to develop in-house training plans. Several indicated that it would be difficult to develop such a tool as they felt that it would have to be customized to their particular industry. However, a valuable, high quality, useful tool would be embraced by the majority of the employers surveyed.

### *Summary of Employer/Business Owner Needs*

*Employers interviewed for this project responded very positively to the suggestion that RPL tools could support their recruitment and retention needs. For many, the lack of a human resource officer and/or human resource department limits their ability to utilize non-traditional recruitment tools. A simple, straight forward set of RPL tools to assist in candidate recruitment, selection and training is needed.*

*Employers reported that they would like to have the RPL tools and services provided through a website. This would make the service available to the whole province, at times that were convenient for the employer.*

*The majority of the employers are willing to pay for a service that is valuable, of high quality, and that would reduce the ‘guess-work’ and time commitment that their traditional recruitment processes require.*

*Employers indicate that they have a need for a broad base of human resource tools; from screening and interview techniques to human rights awareness concerns. Employers do not identify RPL or PLAR tools in particular when they identify their needs – rather, they want to have access to a shopping list of human resource tools. This supports the concept of a human resource website that includes RPL tools, but that provides links to other human resource tools as well.*

*There is also a need to build overall awareness amongst industry and employer communities about the value and benefit of RPL programs and services.*

## **5.0 EMERGING THEMES**

In analyzing the results of the literature and document review, the interview program and the survey work, there are a number of important themes that emerge. These themes inform the creation of the Blueprint for Action which provides a work plan for the RCG as it moves forward in the future to advance RPL programming and services in the province of Saskatchewan.

### **5.1 The Opportunity to Act is Now**

Saskatchewan's current economic growth and development accentuates the need for RPL tools and techniques. A thriving provincial economy, a growth in population, particularly amongst Aboriginal and immigrant groups, and a growing desire to support training, education and career advancement, have resulted in a greater demand for RPL services.

Historically, industry groups and educational institutions have been able to require certification and educational qualifications as a prerequisite to employment and further training. Now, in a labour short environment, employers are willing to recognize and assess prior learning and experience in order to determine whether an employment candidate has the capability to perform the tasks and competencies required of an employment position. Industry is concerned with expanding the labour pool, and RPL tools and procedures represent an effective way of improving access to qualified people.

Educational institutions also realize the value of assisting adult learners who want to continue to acquire formal learning certification and/or want to access work related training programs. As a result, there is a commitment to support the learners' progress through the assessment and recognition of their prior learning and experience.

RPL programming and services have been under-utilized in the past. Support for advancements in RPL will result in greater participation in both the workforce and the educational/training opportunities that are available to Saskatchewan people.

## *5.2 The Benefits of RPL are Known*

A significant amount of research has been conducted to document the value of RPL tools and procedures. As a result, the benefits of using RPL to advance learning and employment opportunities are proven and documented.

RPL processes are valuable to job-seekers who are seeking to document their prior learning and experience to access employment. In addition, individuals can use RPL to effectively ascertain where they should be placed in education and training circumstances. RPL assists to measure prior learning and experience against a set of curricular standards resulting in appropriate placement and avoiding duplication of effort and learning experience.

RPL is an effective tool to assess the knowledge, skills and abilities of target groups of people (aboriginals, immigrants, under-employed, etc.). These individuals may have significant on-the-job and life experiences that qualify them for work and further training. Recognizing their prior knowledge, skills and attitudes can result in a successful placement in education or employment. It is efficient and cost effective to recognize prior skills so that people don't repeat training that focuses on what they already know and can do.

## *5.3 Lack of Awareness Limits Potential*

Although the Recognition of Prior Learning is not a new concept, there is a limited awareness of the processes and applications of RPL. The lack of awareness is not specifically found within one particular target audience, rather there is a general lack of awareness amongst the vast majority of those who could benefit from the application of RPL.

Many educators and trainers do not understand how to assess prior learning and experience in order to support the further education and training requirements of individual learners. Learners are not aware of the option that RPL can provide to them to advance their learning. Job-seekers do not have a good understanding of how to document their prior learning and experience so that they can promote their skills and abilities to prospective employers. And industry does not know what methods to use to qualify candidates for professional certification or employment opportunity.

Overall, a lack of awareness for the value and benefits of RPL contribute to the low levels of RPL application and limits its use as an important human resource instrument to increase and improve the provincial labour pool.

#### [5.4 Need for Expertise and Capacity to Advance RPL](#)

There are education and workplace practitioners in the province who are actively involved in advancing the use of RPL techniques and tools. However, the numbers of practitioners knowledgeable about RPL are relatively small. In order to significantly advance the use of RPL, there is a need to increase the number of people who have learned the techniques to assess and recognize prior learning.

There are several groups and organizations that work with learners, job-seekers, employers and others who would benefit from using RPL tools and techniques. CanSask employees, regional college staff and human resource professionals are examples of groups that would benefit from additional training in the use of RPL tools to support the learning and employment of their client base.

Currently, there are RPL training programs available for individuals, web-based programs that individuals can access on-line and through distance delivery methods, and resources available for home-based and workplace learning. Unfortunately, the general lack of awareness regarding the use and benefits of RPL contributes to relatively low levels of enrollment in training programs and poor access to these resources.

#### [5.5 Workplace Strategies are Needed](#)

Employers recognize that they are experiencing a significant labour shortage today, and that this shortage of labour will continue to be a challenge into the future. While the economy of the province is growing, the size of the labour pool is shrinking. Baby-boomers, which make up a sizeable proportion of the labour pool, are leaving the labour market. Young people continue to seek job opportunities outside of the province, although there has been a significant and somewhat successful effort to reduce the outflow in recent years. The largest population growth in the province is made up of aboriginal people, immigrant groups and transfers from other Canadian jurisdictions. Many of these

individuals can benefit from RPL services to recognize and assess their prior learning and experience.

Human resource planning and workplace strategies are needed in Saskatchewan to address the skills and labour shortages that face employers today and into the future.

The employer survey conducted for this needs assessment research indicates that employers want to learn more about how RPL programs and services can support their human resource planning and management needs.

### [5.6 Technology Tools Can Support Service Delivery](#)

Saskatchewan has a population that is dispersed over a large geographical area. As a result, it is often difficult to provide services and programs to the province's population in a method that is easily accessed by all. Web-based tools have emerged as a valuable method to reach the population.

All of the target populations that participated in the needs assessment; practitioners, job-seekers, learners, and industry representatives indicated that they would like to access information, services and programming through a web-site. Although it is understood that there are segments of the target population that will still benefit from a more personalized, face-to-face intervention, there are others who want to use technology tools to support their RPL needs.

## **6.0 THE WAY FORWARD - A BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION**

The service and programming needs of each of several target audiences for RPL services have been outlined in Section 4.0 of this needs assessment report. Some of the needs overlap, while other needs are unique to a specific target audience. The three primary audiences for RPL programming are; the RPL practitioners, individual learners and jobseekers (including Aboriginal and Immigrant populations) as well as employers and employees.

Through a variety of research methods (literature review, interviews, focus group and survey work) a picture for a future initiative that focuses on the needs for Recognized Prior Learning programming in Saskatchewan emerges. An action strategy, or blueprint, can be advanced to respond to the common needs

of more than one target audience group, while other strategies can be developed to meet the specific needs of a particular target audience.

The following actions form the basis of a 'Blueprint for Action' which can be undertaken by the Recognizing Prior Learning Coordinating Group (RCG).

### 6.1 Website Development

A website provides an opportunity for a large group of provincial residents to access relevant information and practical RPL tools. Practitioners, adult learners and employers all indicated a strong interest in accessing information and resources through a website. Job-seekers, Aboriginal people and Immigrants will have access to the website as well, but may need additional supports and resources to be able to effectively utilize and apply RPL tools.

A provincial website can focus on employment recruitment, employment readiness, learning advancement and relevant research issues. The website can provide information on the concept and value of Recognizing Prior Learning (RPL) as a human resource management tool. The website can include specific menus of resources and tools for each of the target audiences of practitioner/workforce advisor, learner/job-seeker and employer/employee.

#### *- Practitioners*

The RPL practitioners are seeking a website that would provide a venue to share best practices, to network with one another and to explore emerging topics for research and development.

#### *- Learners and Job-Seekers*

Learners want to access a website that will outline the process used to prepare for further education and training. The procedures and steps required to challenge for credits at the key educational institutions in the province could be outlined and supported. In addition, there are existing tools to prepare portfolios on-line. Links to these tools as well as information on portfolio learning support available in Saskatchewan could be provided.

Job-Seekers also want to have access to tools that will support their use of RPL tools to document their knowledge, skills and abilities. Many job-seekers may require additional supports, beyond that which can be offered on a website,

however the website would be available to those that feel comfortable using technology to advance their job-search and employment preparation.

### *- Employers and Employees*

Employers and employees want a website that will provide them with human resource management tools and methods that can be used to support the career advancement of individuals who are currently employed within the company. Some of these tools are specific to RPL while other tools are appropriate to all businesses who are seeking human resource information. The website can be developed in such a way as to provide links to other sources of information resulting in a 'Virtual Human Resource Department' for small and medium-sized business owners and employers. The website would include access to RPL tools to support the assessment of knowledge, skills and attitudes of potential and current employees. The website could also include information and tools on interviewing, recruitment, retention, compensation, human resource planning and other topics of interest. There are many high quality existing supports and tools available and the website could support linkages to these resources.

### *Sample RPL and Website Tools*

There are many RPL tools that have already been developed by other reputable agencies, educational institutions and human resource practitioners. There is little need for the Ministry and its stakeholders to develop new resources, rather it would make more sense to provide links to existing tools and adapt existing resources to a Saskatchewan scenario where needed. A list of resources and RPL tools is provided. This is not an exhaustive list, as there are numerous resources. This list represents the tools that we located during the course of the literature review.

- **Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST)**  
SIAST website provides information about PLAR, assistance in determining if a learner is a good candidate for PLAR, PLAR ready courses, and information on transfer credit.  
<http://www.siastr.sk.ca/siastr/admissions/plar.htm>
- **Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST)**  
**RPL Certified Practitioner Program** is an advanced certificate program delivered through distance education. The program provides training for practitioners working in a variety of fields such as education, career counseling and human resource management.  
<http://www.siastr.sk.ca/siastr/educationtraining/advancedcertificate/5883/8665/5854/index.shtml#programdetails>
- **Workplace Literacy Central** The Conference Board of Canada  
Website provides information to employers who are looking to increase levels of literacy and basic skills in the workplace. There are links with resources for employers looking to develop workplace literacy training programs.  
<http://www.conferenceboard.ca/workplaceliteracy/default.asp>
- **Workplace Basic Skills**  
Website provides information on what workplace basic skills are as well as links to online tools that can assist in the measurement of skills needs, gains and outcomes, benefits and impacts, and costs. <http://www.workplacebasicskills.com/>
- **Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES)**  
Website provides information and sample assessment resources on the three essential skills (reading text, document use, and numeracy) required for safety and productivity in the workplace. <http://www.towes.com/home.aspx>
- **A Guide To Assist In the Preparation of A Portfolio For Education Vocational and Career Planning**  
First Nations Technical Institute, Ontario  
Manual that assists individuals who are participating in a prior learning assessment process by providing information and support in completing the PLAR process.
- **Utilizing Prior Learning Assessment and Portfolio Development in Adult Basic Education**  
First Nations Technical Institute, Ontario  
Manual provides content-specific information to Haudenosanee First Nation adult learners and is a workbook for individuals undertaking the PLAR process and portfolio development. There is a focus on the need for PLAR to be culturally sensitive to various learners' experiences and needs for support during the process.
- **Training Manual for PLA Advisors (Focused on Aboriginal Learners)**  
First Nations Technical Institute, Ontario  
Guide outlines the essential skills of the advisor and explores the cultural implications of RPL through portfolio development.

- **Managing Your Human Assets: A Human Resource Guide for Small Business Employers,** Garven & Associates , for Advanced Education, Employment and Labour (AEEL) Saskatchewan  
A self-study learning tool designed to inform small and medium-sized (SME) employers about human resource management skills. The resource tool covers important HR concepts and integrates guidelines, recommendations, tools and templates for employers to implement.
- **The Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness**  
The Gwenna Moss Centre website provides information on PLAR at the University of Saskatchewan, including flowcharts, assessment forms and links to PLAR sites both within and outside of Canada.  
<http://www.usask.ca/gmcte/drupal/?q=node/166>
- **The University of Regina**  
The University of Regina’s Career Centre website indicates that the university offers “some limited opportunity” for PLAR. Students are advised to contact individual faculty or college offices for additional information on PLAR.  
<http://www.uregina.ca/cxc/index.php>
- **Adult Learning Focused Institution (ALFI) Assessment Toolkit**  
The Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL)  
Provides a framework of policies and practices to make educational programs more attractive and accessible to adult learners. Includes a Self-Assessment Survey and an Adult Learner Inventory <http://www.cael.org/alfi/tools.html>
- **Grasslands Recruitment Specialists**  
Private Sector Company - Website has information about ‘SmartHire Services’ as well as testing and assessments that can assist employers with human resource needs including recruitment and management of their employees.  
<http://www.grasslandsgroup.com>
- **Red River College – PLAR Information**  
The Red River College website provides general information on PLAR, how assessment is done, what the benefits are when an individual undertakes the PLAR process and links to contact information for specific programs offered at the college.  
<http://www.rrc.mb.ca/index.php?pid=404>

There is also a site targeting instructors which provides information on what students and staff need to know about PLAR; professional development and PLAR; and the Certificate in Adult Education program (CAE). There are links to guides for portfolio development for students as well as a PLAR Practitioner Self-Assessment Guide and Inventory Tool.

<http://air.rrc.mb.ca/PLAR/default.aspx>

- **Recognition for Learning**  
Community Learning Initiative of Canadian Association of Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA)  
The ‘Recognition for Learning’ website provides links to PLAR information under various categories including: articles and reports, research studies and tools, among others.  
<http://www.recognitionforlearning.ca/practitioner/resources.php>

- **SaskCAT**  
The SaskCAT website provides information on transfer credits between educational institutions in Saskatchewan. <http://www.SaskCAT.ca/>
- **PLA Centre** , Halifax Nova Scotia  
Website provides links to reports and other publications which provide background information on PLAR. A portfolio learning process is also available on-line. In addition, the PLA Centre provides on-line training for PLAR advisors.  
<http://www.placentre.ns.ca/index2.php>
- **Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning (CIRL)** <http://www.cirl.org/index.html>  
The CIRL website provides information on PLAR, credential assessment, training, professional development, learning and skills outcomes development, assessment tool development, and program evaluation. There is a section on the site that deals specifically with PLAR at some of the universities in Canada.
- **Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT)**  
Website provides general information on PLAR in Alberta, including a section on best practices as well as links to reports done on PLAR. The site also provides information on transferring credit between educational institutions and specific program information.  
<http://www.acat.gov.ab.ca/>
- **Arrive BC**  
Website provides information for both skilled immigrants as well as employers. There are comprehensive lists of links to sector resources, education and credential assessments and resources geared specifically toward New Canadians.  
<http://www.arrivebc.com/index.html>
- **Workplace Informal Learning Matrix (WILM)**  
These matrices are tools designed to assist in measuring the complexity of informal learning in a workplace. WILM can be used as a self assessment guide or can be used to assess multiple employees.  
<http://www.wilm.ca/en/index.html>
- **Essential Skills - Human Resources and Service Development Canada**  
The Essential Skills website includes assessment and survey tools for both workplaces and individuals. [http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/home\\_e.shtml](http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/home_e.shtml)
- **Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks – PLAR Profile Checklist**  
Checklist is designed for advisors who are assisting a client develop a PLAR profile and proof of learning plan.  
[http://www.language.ca/display\\_page.asp?page\\_id=809](http://www.language.ca/display_page.asp?page_id=809)
- **A Journey of Self-Discovery Facilitator’s Guide to Reflection and Portfolio Development**  
Advanced Education, Employment and Labour –  
Provides information on the development of portfolios including activities for reflection and resources.  
<http://www.aeel.gov.sk.ca/Default.aspx?DN=4a88bdaf-b969-409f-8884-fe0defbe2998>

- **Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology – PLA Training Modules**  
These training modules are PLA content-specific and provide hands-on activities for learners as well as support for facilitators.  
[http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/pla/16\\_BC\\_PLATrainingModules\\_AbstractOnly.pdf](http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/pla/16_BC_PLATrainingModules_AbstractOnly.pdf)

## 6.2 Awareness Building

There is a very strong need for activities that are designed to build awareness of RPL programs and services as a tool to advance learning and to support employment in Saskatchewan. For the most part, the knowledge of RPL is housed within a small group of individuals who are actively involved in their roles as RPL practitioners. Learners, Job-Seekers, Industry and Employers have almost no knowledge of the concept of RPL and of the tools that can be accessed to support their learning, employment and business activities.

A communications/awareness strategy should be developed to outline a plan for each of the target market segments that can benefit from RPL; learners, job-seekers and industry/employers. The awareness campaign can be developed in partnership with professional business associations and organizations, sector associations, Chambers of Commerce, Human Resource Departments, the Apprenticeship Association, and others. Educational institutions, school boards, private educational institutions and industry associations can also provide partnership opportunities for building awareness amongst learners and job-seekers of all ages.

A lack of awareness, knowledge and understanding results in fewer people having access to the benefits that RPL tools and procedures can provide.

In order to develop a comprehensive action on RPL awareness, it will be necessary to allocate human and financial resources to the task. AEEL could consider allocating one Full Time Equivalent (FTE) position to the advancement of RPL programming and service in Saskatchewan. This individual would be responsible for overseeing website development and for preparing and implementing the communication strategy.

### 6.3 Enhanced RPL Tools

Portfolio learning is an important tool in the repertoire of RPL programs and services. Just as artists have portfolios to profile their work, individuals can build a portfolio filled with information about knowledge, skills, talents, abilities, attitudes and achievements. Portfolios are designed to recognize and document the 'whole' person. A portfolio highlights the individual by outlining where they have been in their past and where they are planning to go in their future.

Developing a portfolio is not a process that is needed by all individuals who are seeking to enter the workforce, although the process of portfolio development can be advantageous to all. There are however, a select group of individuals that will benefit in a significant way from the development of a personal portfolio. Those who have low levels of confidence, non-traditional learning experiences, volunteer work, and other uncredentialed activities can highlight their prior learning and experience through a portfolio.

An effective and efficient way to advance portfolio learning and development is to utilize existing employment resources that are available in the province. Individuals seeking jobs in Saskatchewan currently use the services of the Canada-Saskatchewan Career and Employment Service (CSCES) offices located in twenty centres throughout the province. In the past fiscal year, the number of clients who used advisory services and intervention reached a total of 11,607. Although not all of these clients require comprehensive assistance to acquire appropriate employment positions, many use the CSCES offices because they have employment barriers or are in need of coaching and support. A portion of these clients (individuals with multiple barriers) would benefit from a portfolio learning process that would assist them to overcome barriers through identification of their personal skills, abilities and attributes. Can-Sask Employment Centres provide a logical location to further RPL awareness and to provide access to RPL tools, instruction and support.

Other agencies that could support the application of RPL tools and portfolio development are the regional colleges, community-based organizations, Aboriginal training and educational institutions, as well as others involved in employment and training services.

#### 6.4 Capacity Building

In order for RPL programs and services to be advanced in the province of Saskatchewan, there will be a need to encourage more training amongst individuals who provide learning and employment services. There are existing programs available for individuals to participate in. However, many of these programs require a significant commitment of time and resources to complete. Initially, there is a need to provide introductory seminars to improve overall awareness, to identify the benefits of RPL and to determine where RPL programming fits into the compliment of programs and services currently being offered in the province.

#### 6.5 Networking

There is a significant amount of effort placed on the development of RPL knowledge and application throughout the province and in Canada. Some practitioners report that they do not have a good network of contacts which allows them to learn from one another, to explore emerging research and to share best practices. Continued support for the establishment of a provincial RPL network with the ability to utilize the RPL website and other tools (conference, newsletters, etc.) to advance and enhance RPL expertise in the province is warranted.

In addition, there are private and public sector companies that have well developed RPL tools and techniques that are currently being utilized in their business. Many of these groups are prepared to share their experience with other business owners and employers to advance the use of RPL techniques.

Several national and international organizations have excellent information, tools and resources available on the topic of prior learning assessment and credit acquisition. The provincial RPL network should build bridges to other organizations, developing a pan-Canadian network of contacts and resources through website linkages and reciprocal agreements on information sharing.

## 6.6 Blueprint Timeline

It will take time to make significant change in the use and acceptance of RPL tools. However, this is an excellent point in time to make inroads. The employers interviewed for this project were anxious to implement tools and procedures that will assist them to expand the existing labour market, to more effectively recruit new employees and retain the employees that they already have on staff. There is a strong commitment to advancing learning in the Aboriginal and immigrant populations in the province, in order to improve lifestyle and to successfully engage more individuals in the workforce. The time is right to move quickly to build on the good work that has been done by RPL practitioners over the past 15 years.



















Each of the recommended Action Strategies have been identified in Table 6.1, suggesting when they should be addressed over the next three year timeframe. Website development should be undertaken immediately. This will necessarily require some communication planning to launch the website and advertise its availability to Saskatchewan people.

**Table 6.1 The Way Forward – A Blueprint for Action**

Action/Activity	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<b>Website Development</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Create overall awareness information and general information on RPL. ✓</li> <li>▪ Provide references to competency profiles and methods to create competency-based tools for assessing and recognizing prior learning and experience. ✓</li> <li>▪ Develop a menu of resources, tools and services for each specific target audience; practitioners, learners, job-seekers, employers and industry/business:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Practitioner – best practices, emerging topics for research, networking with colleagues. ✓</li> <li>- Learners/Job Seekers – process and steps required to challenge for credits, RPL programs and services, on-line preparation of portfolios, tools to highlight skills and abilities. ✓</li> <li>- Industry/Employers – Provide RPL tools and links to other human resource management tools that will enhance the Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SME's) ability to improve overall HR abilities and to assess and recognize prior knowledge, skills and attitudes. ✓</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Establish linkages to other national and international sites ✓</li> <li>▪ Maintain and update website. ✓</li> </ul>			

Action/Activity	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
<b>Awareness-Building</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Allocate human resources to the management and operation of the provincial response to RPL needs (1 FTE).</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish a communication strategy for RPL awareness building with specific actions designed to meet the awareness needs of each of the target audiences.</li> </ul>	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implement the Communication Strategy (advertising, linkages to other websites, conference presentations, presentations to professional associations, etc.).</li> </ul>		✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish partnerships to implement the awareness strategy: business associations, Chambers of Commerce, educational institutions, private sector companies serving employer recruitment needs, etc.</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓
<b>Capacity Building</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop and deliver seminars to potential RPL services and program stakeholders to improve overall awareness of RPL benefits and applications.</li> </ul>	✓		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide opportunity for practitioners within Can-Sask, Regional Colleges, CBOs, Aboriginal Education and Training Institutions, and others, to receive training on RPL processes and tools to advance employment readiness and learning.</li> </ul>		✓	✓
<b>Enhanced Client Centered Learning Tools</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Identify, test and promote RPL tools that have application within Sask. target audiences (Aboriginal, Immigrant, Multi-Barriered Job-Seekers, etc.). Enhance opportunities to incorporate portfolio development as an employment readiness tool along with other RPL tools and techniques.</li> </ul>		✓	✓
<b>Networking</b>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Establish and support a provincial RPL network to share best management practices, tools and techniques.</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Link the provincial RPL network with other Canadian and International Networking opportunities</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Support Collaborative Research.</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓


## 6.7 *Blueprint Costing*

<b>Table 6.2      Blueprint for Action – Cost Estimates</b>				
<b>Action/Activity</b>	<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>	<b>Year 3</b>	
<b>Website Development*</b>				
▪ Professional website design.	\$75,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	
▪ Website promotion.				
<b>Awareness Building**</b>				
▪ Develop a Communication Strategy.	\$75,000	-	-	
▪ Implement Communication Strategy.		\$100,000	\$100,000	
▪ Establish partnerships with others to advance awareness.				
<b>Capacity Building***</b>				
▪ Offer seminars to develop awareness and general knowledge of RPL programming and services. Seminars with private sector companies, labour, regulatory bodies, etc.	\$100,000	\$75,000	\$75,000	
▪ Provide opportunities for training, in partnership with other agencies and government ministries, for those individuals involved in providing services to target populations (Aboriginal, Immigrant and Job-Seekers with multiple barriers).	-	\$150,000	\$150,000	
				
<b>Enhanced Client-Centered Learning Tools</b>				
▪ Identify, test and promote RPL tools.				
<b>Networking</b>				
▪ Develop and support provincial network.				
▪ Enhance links with other national and international RPL organizations and networks.				
▪ Support collaborative research to enhance RPL programming and service options in Saskatchewan.	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$150,000	
<b>Total Costing</b>	<b>\$400,000</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>	<b>\$500,000</b>	

\* The cost of website development is determined on the basis of: 1) the total number of pages, 2) the interactivity of the site, 3) special functionality and scripts that need to be incorporated, 4) customization of specific applications, 5) images and photos, 6) support and training required to run the online maintenance of the site.

\*\* The creation of a communication strategy should include a plan to 'brand' RPL in Saskatchewan, the development of key messages and should determine various effective methods to communicate key messages to various target markets (practitioners, learners, job-seekers, industry, employers, employees, etc.) Implementation of the communication strategy will require resources for advertising and promotional tools.

\*\*\* Capacity Building/Training can be provided in two steps. First, a series of seminars to generate awareness, interest and to build basic skills so individuals can make appropriate choices when making referrals. Second, there is a need for a larger number of RPL practitioners to work with various target groups in the future. Partnerships for delivery of service will be needed.

 Represents one full-time equivalent human resource. This human resource position should be fully allocated to the development, promotion and support of RPL services in Saskatchewan.

## APPENDIX 1 KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

KEY INFORMANTS	
INTERVIEWEE/CLASSIFICATION	CONTACT NAME
<b>Management / Policy</b>	
AEEL - Adult Learning Development	Ann Lorenzen
AEEL - International Recognition and Experience	Carolyn Hubble
AEEL - Community Partnerships and Settlement – Immigration	Giovanna Pirro
AEEL - Career and Employment Services	Jan Morgan
AEEL - Universities and Adult Learning	Reg Urbanowski
First Nations and Métis Relations	Victoria Gubbels
<b>Practitioners</b>	
Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Research and Technology (SIAST)	Kim Orynik Grant MacTavish
University of Regina	Rosetta Khalideen
University of Saskatchewan	Andrea Wasylow
First Nations University of Canada	Shauneen Pete
Saskatchewan Regional Colleges	Sheryl Prouse
Researcher/Teacher	Shelley Hosaluk
SAHO - Career Pathing Project	Dianne Barrow
Northern InterTribal Health Authority	Paulette Campbell
Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council	Diane Cohoon
Regina Open Door Society	Richard Krahn Steve Jeskie Tom Dixon Josie Vantour Devin Malakoff
PLA Centre – Halifax	Douglas Meyers Mary Morrissey
Manitoba Centre for Work	Carol Hawkins Robin Miller
First Nations Technical Institute and Adult Learner Friendly Institutions (ALFI)	Paul Zakos
<b>Industry Representatives</b>	
Cameco	Kaylynn Schroeder
Vecima Industries	Tracy Miller
The Cooperators	Sandy Ram
Saskatchewan Apprenticeship Trades Commission	Glenn Heisler
Saskatchewan Labour Market Commission	Ron Torgerson
Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce	Holly Hetherington
Canadian Homebuilders Association	Darcy Acton
Saskatoon and Region Homebuilders Assoc	Karen Rosser
Saskatchewan Construction Association	Doug Folk

## APPENDIX 2                      INDUSTRY SURVEY RESPONDENTS

COMPANIES SURVEYED	
COMPANY NAME	CONTACT
Profit Systems Inc.	Chris Imrie
Yail Harbour Inc.	Bev Locusta
Innovation Place	Sherry Timmerman
Cypress Hills Health District	Erin Soos
Pioneer Grain	Kirk
Rail City Industries Inc.	Carol Ann
Sheraton Cavalier Hotel	Yvonne
Northwest Nations Education Council	Gerry Guillet
Kanawayimik Child and Family Services Inc.	Irene Tootoosis
Kindersley Transport	Brenda Cuthbert
Cornerstone Credit	Kelli Blajieki
Saskatchewan Research Council	Lynne
North Battleford Housing Authority	Jenny Reyalson
SCCH Daycare	Denise Fedunbo
Johnson Controls	Danny Thompson
Rainbow Youth Centre	Sophie Grahame
Regina Education and Action on Child Hunger (REACH)	Dana Folkerson
Travelodge Hotel	Jim Bence
Saskatchewan Abilities Council	Corey Adam
Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation	Louise Sawyer
Sakimay First Nation	Darcia Kaysaywaysemat
Northwest Regional College	Patti Coulson
YWCA Saskatoon	Barb Macpherson
MCK Concrete Ltd.	Marana Faulkner
Access Communications Co-operative	Beth Drozda
North Battleford United Way	Trina Rathwell

## **APPENDIX 3**                      **RPL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IN SASKATCHEWAN**

### 1 Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST)

SIAST has a well-developed process for applying Prior Learning Assessment (PLAR) processes to their programs offered in Saskatchewan. The SIAST website provides information on PLAR for individuals who want to use a PLAR process. The website provides details on how PLAR works and how prior learning is assessed at SIAST.

SIAST has created a PLAR Inventory Database which outlines the courses that are 'PLAR ready'. There are numerous courses that are available for a student to challenge through a PLAR process. The SIAST inventory indicates how each course is challenged; either by evidence provided by the learner, or by a prescribed testing procedure. The fees to have a PLAR procedure undertaken vary from \$60 - \$150 for course assessment (or tuition fee whichever is less), \$300 for a block of courses and 33% of tuition fee for an entire program challenge. SIAST conducts approximately 1,000 course challenges a year.

SIAST also offers an advanced certificate program called the 'Recognition of Prior Learning Practitioner'. This certificate is obtained as a result of 260 hours of course work, completed through home study. There are 6 core courses including: Introduction to the Recognition of Prior Learning, Advocacy Practices, Career Development Applications, Prior Learning Assessments, Advisory Services, and Portfolio Development. Students also choose 6 credits of electives from the following courses: Career Counseling with Aboriginal Clients, Capacity Building, Client Assessment, and Recruitment and Retention Applications. The RPL Practitioner certificate can be used to access and advance careers in areas of human resource planning, career counseling, and in education and training, among others.

As is the case with other educational institutions in Saskatchewan, SIAST also accepts transfer credit(s) from other educational and training institutions. Credit transfer is an important aspect of RPL. The SIAST website lists the transfer credits that are recognized by SIAST programs and also lists the SIAST programs that are recognized for transfer credit to other institutions. SIAST works cooperatively with SaskCAT to support the transference of credits.

## [2 University of Saskatchewan](#)

The University of Saskatchewan began researching the viability of prior learning assessment and recognition at the university level in 1998. Angie Wong, a U. of S. faculty member, played an instrumental role in coordinating pilot projects. She prepared a PLAR Guide for University Faculty and Administrators which was published in 1999. Following her leadership, the University began to develop a policy to grant credit to individuals who had acquired the skills and knowledge associated with individual university courses, but who had not participated in formal education in the subject area. In 2002, the Academic Programs Committee approved the 'Challenge for Credit Policy'. Through this policy, the University of Saskatchewan has committed to a PLAR process for students who wish to challenge for credit.

Information on the PLAR process, including what PLAR is, a flowchart indicating the step-by-step process when challenging for credit, an application form, agreement form and outcome of assessment form, is found on the 'Gwenna Moss Centre for Teaching Effectiveness' website. The website provides links to PLAR websites both inside and outside of Canada, assessment resources and portfolio development resources.

In order to apply to have prior learning recognized, an individual must be registered as a student with the University. Upon submitting an application form, students pay a \$75 assessment fee, along with half of the tuition fee for each course challenged, for up to three courses. In addition, an assessment fee must also be paid for the student to meet with a faculty advisor to discuss the challenge for a particular course. The University of Saskatchewan uses a variety of assessment strategies to evaluate student competencies including prior work experience, written materials, testing, etc.

The U of S indicates that PLAR is not appropriate for all classes. It is determined by each individual department whether they will allow a student to challenge a class. As is the case with SIAST, students meet with a PLAR advisor in the Student and Enrolment Services Department before undertaking this process.

### 3 University of Regina

The University of Regina's Career Centre website indicates that the University offers "some limited opportunity" for PLAR. The website explains that PLAR involves a formal assessment of knowledge and skills acquired during a variety of learning experiences and that recognition is not awarded solely for prior experience.

As is the case with the University of Saskatchewan, the student must contact the department which administers the course that they would like to challenge. It is determined by the department which courses can be challenged. Business administration, education and activity-based courses are not eligible for challenge. The fee to challenge is the same as full tuition and fees for the regular course.

There is a small amount of information on PLAR available in the Undergraduate Calendar however, the information is not detailed.

### 4 Saskatchewan Regional Colleges

A two year pilot project focusing on RPL services was undertaken by the Regional Colleges, beginning in 2006. In the first year of the project, information gathering and sharing took place. In the second year, the focus was on production of an RPL toolkit geared specifically for Regional Colleges. The project also included RPL training for regional college staff.

Regional Colleges do not grant credit for specific courses, but rather assist students and adult learners with resume development, portfolio development and support the recognition of all forms of learning during the process of seeking employment. The RPL services that are offered by Regional Colleges differs from one provincial location to another, as some colleges are larger and have more resources than others. Basic advising about transfer credit, qualification recognition and PLAR support services are offered at all locations/sites. Some of the more specific knowledge regarding portfolio development is not offered by all sites due to a lack of resources.

Several regional college faculty members are involved in conducting PLAR challenges for SIAST courses that are being delivered in their regions.

Regional Colleges report that RPL services are frequently requested by both individual learners and employers however, the term 'RPL' or 'PLAR' is not always used to describe these services. Employers often indicate that they are struggling to find qualified candidates to fill employment positions. The Regional Colleges support employer recruitment including programming to address Essential Skills Training and Job Start Future Skills. These programs are considered to be a part of the RPL services provided by the Colleges.

Employers who have hired immigrant employees also require English as a Second Language services and want to better understand how to retain immigrant workers once their initial employment contract has expired. Regional Colleges report that the strongest demand for RPL services, although not identified as RPL services, comes from employers who are hiring New Canadians.

### 5 Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO)

SAHO has implemented a 'Career Pathing Project' designed to develop a more representative workforce in the health sector of Saskatchewan. Career Pathing helps employees to identify and document their learning applicable to the health sector. Documenting knowledge, skills and abilities is done through the development of portfolios. In addition, individuals develop individual learning plans to support their career advancement and learning.

The Career Pathing Project has a strong focus on the inclusion of Aboriginal people at all levels of the workforce. The Career Pathing Project is being piloted at seven test sites throughout Saskatchewan.

Career Pathing is expected to assist in the retention of employees while at the same time, growing the value and expertise of the workforce. The Career Pathing project is linked to RPL in that the project acts as a support to employees who are looking to apply for formal recognition for the skills they have acquired through their previous training, work, and life experiences. It is anticipated that the project will assist three hundred (300) employees in the development of a portfolio.

A particularly interesting result of the program is the creation of a new occupational category; 'Career Pathing Advisor'. The project will develop a Resource Manual for future Career Pathing initiatives and will serve as a mentorship model and guide for the health care industry.

## 6 Saskatchewan Tourism Education Council (STEC)

STEC offers a variety of programs and services for individuals interested in pursuing careers in the tourism industry. Programs offered by STEC include: Service Best, Serve It Right: Responsible Alcohol Service, Train the Workplace Trainer, WHMIS, Tourism Transferable Skills, Special Events Workshops, Skills Specific Workshops, and Customized Workshops. STEC has partnered with other agencies and has developed national certification for twenty-seven (27) occupations ranging from banquet server to front desk agent to tourism region manager. The cost for most certifications is approximately \$300.00.

The STEC website provides information on the tourism programs offered and also provides links to other websites. There is a link to a national career planning website which allows individuals to take a self-administered quiz to assess skills and interests. The website provides information on occupational profiles, education (tourism education and training opportunities across Canada) as well as testimonials from individuals working in the tourism industry.

The Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (CTHRC) has developed a program called 'Ready to Work' which fosters career awareness, skills development and a 'Transition to Employment' program. 'Ready to Work' is geared towards all individuals interested in the tourism industry, however it has a strong focus on under-represented groups such as Aboriginal people as well as non-traditional labour pools. (STEC delivers the 'Ready to Work' program in Saskatchewan.) The 'Ready to Work' program provides individuals with entry-level career and transferable skills training. This is gained through the CTHRC's Tourism Essential Skills program. The 'Ready to Work' program encompasses twelve weeks of training, consisting of eight weeks in a classroom setting and four weeks in a workplace setting. There is also a mentorship component for students as well as assistance with career planning once they have completed their twelve weeks.

The 'Ready to Work' program benefits not only students, but also employers. Employers are able to feel confident that hiring a 'Ready to Work' graduate means that the person has been well trained and is prepared for work. Employing well-trained employees will limit the need for on-the-job training which will be a cost-saving for employers. The cost for one individual to complete the 'Ready to Work' program is approximately \$5,000. This cost

includes the twelve weeks of classroom and workplace learning and forty hours of career assistance and mentoring once that individual has completed their training. The funding for the program comes from both the provincial and federal governments.

STEC also offers an apprenticeship program which takes approximately 2-3 years to complete, depending on the specific occupation. An apprenticeship program allows individuals to pursue their education while still working.

## 7 Industry Initiatives

There are several businesses in the province that are using RPL tools to assess and recognize the learning that employees have acquired through prior learning and experience. Typically, it is the larger company, with a well developed Human Resource Department that has implemented RPL services and programming for employees. Some companies have implemented competency-based interviews, competency profiles for certain occupations and skills testing to ascertain the level of prior knowledge, skills and abilities that individuals bring to the their workplace. In addition, these tools can be used to assist in the design of a future training development program.

As part of the research conducted for this Needs Assessment, three companies who are actively utilizing RPL tools were identified; SaskTel, Vecima Networks Inc.<sup>37</sup> and Saskatchewan Crop Insurance. No doubt there are many more companies that have implemented RPL processes to assess prior knowledge, skills and abilities.

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<sup>37</sup> Vecima Networks Inc. is a Saskatoon-based electronic manufacturing company. In 2008, Vecima received a Saskatchewan Literacy Award of Merit for its exceptional performance and accomplishment in literacy. The award was given for undertaking a training prototype that addresses employee recruitment, retention and advancement. The prototype focuses on English Language Training and is transferable to other Saskatchewan companies. Taken from the Saskatoon Star Phoenix, Wednesday, September 24, 2008, Page L3

**APPENDIX 4****BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RESOURCES**

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