



# Learner Skill Attainment Bulletin

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## Definition and Goals

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Learner Skill Attainment (LSA) is one of nine core draft performance measures being developed as part of MTCU's Continuous Improvement Performance Management System (CIPMS). LSA is part of the "Performance Measurement" component of CIPMS as one of six core measures related to "Effectiveness". Through the LSA Initiative a validation draft LSA Framework is being developed to support the implementation of this draft core measure in Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programming. The validation draft of the LSA Framework will be linked to three of the nine HRSDC Essential Skills: Reading Text, Document Use and Numeracy.

A key goal of the work being done in LSA is to make the language of learner skill attainment in LBS more transparent to all partners in the broader Employment Ontario spectrum. LBS providers need to be able to describe learner gains in skills and knowledge in such a way as to be meaningful to key stakeholders such as Apprenticeship, Job Connect, Adjustment Advisory and Ontario Works thus validating the role of Literacy and Basic Skills and Academic Upgrading in Ontario skills training. The three key Essential Skills of Reading Text, Document Use and Numeracy have been chosen for corporate reporting purposes by MTCU as part of the Continuous Improvement Performance Management System.

# LSA Present and Future

Currently learner skill attainment in Ontario is captured across the five LBS levels using a variety of assessment tools and methods and reported electronically through the Information Management System (IMS). Increases in LBS learning outcomes levels (along the scale of levels 1-5) is the primary measure and the basis of inter-agency understanding of assessment results. The assessment approach is goal-directed and is based on learners attaining the literacy skills required for their goals of employment, further education and training, and independence. The approach is “outcomes-based” where the skills are gained by completing meaningful tasks and activities related to the main goal for that learner. Skills learned are embedded in the tasks being completed. “Authentic” assessment tools (demonstrations) as well as other assessment tools are used to assess the whole, meaningful task required by the goal.

The LSA Initiative is exploring the use of Essential Skills/International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey scales as a common language for all stakeholders in Literacy and Basic Skills. The LSA Initiative is focused on building a LSA Framework supported by three of the nine recognized Essential Skills:

- ⇒ Reading Text
- ⇒ Document Use
- ⇒ Numeracy

The Essential Skills/IALSS scales will provide transparency of results at the provincial level, within the Employment Ontario spectrum and nationally.

Many of the elements of the current assessment approach remain constant under the LSA Initiative. The assessment approach is still goal-directed but it is now also “transition-oriented”. Assessing the success of learners is based on the attainment of literacy, numeracy and essential skills required for transitions to specific destinations that are part of their goals of employment, further education and training and lifelong learning.

The approach remains outcomes-based under the initiative and skills will continue to be assessed as they relate to “complex performances” (outcomes) that are required by the goal. Practitioners will be able to describe learning outcomes in terms of what a learner is able to do or where a learner is able to go at the completion of their training. Authentic assessment tools (demonstrations) will be used to assess whole meaningful tasks required by the goal in addition to other assessment tools. However, the identification of changes in the Human Resources and Skill Development Canada (HRSDC) Essential Skills/ International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey (IALSS) levels for the skills of reading text, document use and numeracy will be used as the indicators of the attainment of the skills required for a particular transition that is part of a learner’s goal, as well as the basis of common inter-agency understanding of assessment results.

A transition pathway approach forms the basis of the LSA Framework currently being developed under the LSA Initiative. The LSA Framework will include the critical skills needed in reading text, document use and numeracy for the following five goal “transition paths”:

- ⇒ Foundations for Independence
- ⇒ Employment
- ⇒ Apprenticeship
- ⇒ Secondary school credit study, and
- ⇒ Postsecondary education

LBS currently categorizes adult learners’ education goals into three broad areas:

## Personal Employment Further Education & Training

Through the LSA Initiative five distinct transition paths have been identified:

Transition Path: Foundations for Independence	Transition Path to Employment	Transition Path to Apprenticeship	Transition Path to Postsecondary	Transition Path to Secondary Credit
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# LSA Framework Draft: Development Process

## Learner Skill Attainment Workgroup

In the fall of 2006, 13 agencies were funded by MTCU to complete 17 projects to develop and support the LSA framework. Representatives from the projects and other organizational participants from all streams and sectors were invited to meet in January 2007 to form the Learner Skill Attainment Workgroup. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the Ministry of Education also participated in this working group.

This working group was charged with:

- ⇒ Providing a forum for input to inform the work of the Framework Development Project Team
- ⇒ Contributing to the development of a measure of Learner Skill Attainment that reflects between level as well as across level achievement
- ⇒ Cross-referencing the deliverables of the Learner Skill Attainment Framework Development Project to work being done on individual projects
- ⇒ Advising on the creation of a manageable assessment approach
- ⇒ Contributing to the overall coherence and transparency of the framework
- ⇒ Assisting in identifying any gaps in the framework that may result from the point of view of streams/sectors

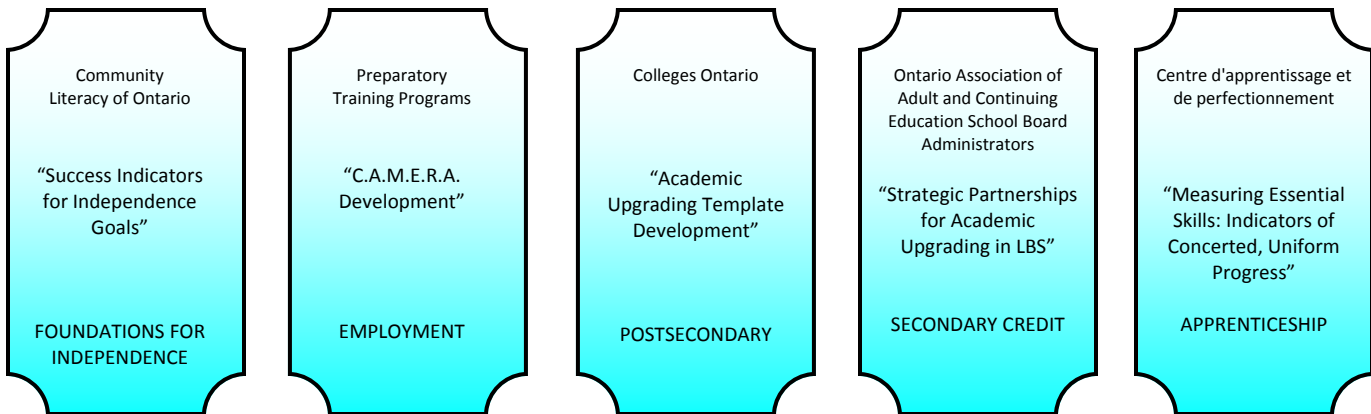
(excerpt from the LSA Terms of Reference 2006/2007 page 3)

At the initial meeting the larger group was divided into two smaller working groups:

- ⇒ Foundation Skills Workgroup
- ⇒ Higher Skills Workgroup

## Framework Development Project Team

As part of the process of developing the LSA framework, five lead projects were identified. Each of the five projects had their own set of independent deliverables to work on, in addition to their advisory role for the overarching LSA framework. The work of each project supported one of the identified transition pathways.



The Framework Development Project Team met several times in 2007 to discuss how LBS could be reconciled with a skill attainment approach premised on essential skills. As the framework evolved, common elements became evident for each pathway. Currently, each draft pathway includes a global definition, a description of the core program content and the focus for instruction (personal, workplace, or academic).

In addition to having one of five lead projects, CLO was also charged with keeping the LSA Foundation Skills Workgroup informed regarding the progress and development in the “Success Indicators for Independence Goals” project. Colleges Ontario played a similar role with respect to the Higher Skills Workgroup.

The LSA Foundation Skills Workgroup was comprised of representatives from the following organizations/project teams:

- ⇒ Durham Deaf Services
- ⇒ Kingston Literacy
- ⇒ Literacy Network Northeast
- ⇒ Ontario Native Literacy Coalition Project Team
- ⇒ Preparatory Training Programs Project Team
- ⇒ Literacy Link Eastern Ontario Project Team
- ⇒ Deaf Literacy Initiative Project Team
- ⇒ Francophone Stream
- ⇒ Laubach Literacy of Ontario

The LSA Higher Skills Workgroup was comprised of representatives from the following organizations/project teams:

- ⇒ Colleges Ontario Project Team
- ⇒ Ontario Association of Adult and Continuing Education School Board Administrators (CESBA) Project Team
- ⇒ Literacy Network Northeast
- ⇒ Centre d'apprentissage et de perfectionnement Project Team
- ⇒ Preparatory Training Programs Project Team
- ⇒ Seneca College Project Team
- ⇒ Literacy Link Eastern Ontario Project Team
- ⇒ L'ABC Communautaire Project Team
- ⇒ La Cite Collegiale Project Team
- ⇒ Deaf Literacy Initiative – Deaf Stream Representative

# Success Indicators for Independence Goals

The objective of CLO's project, "Success Indicators for Independence Goals", was to research and develop a draft "Independence Framework" to identify the success indicators and transition markers in the goal of "independence" that are needed to demonstrate foundations for learning relevant to three of the nine Essential Skills: Reading Text, Document Use and Numeracy.

CLO's project informed the development of the "**Foundations for Independence**" pathway and identified critical skills needed for successful transition in a separate framework that stands alone but fits within the overarching LSA framework.

Interviews were conducted with key informants from a broad range of community-based LBS programs across the province (14 programs in total) to determine the most common learner goals related to independence and to identify core skills necessary to achieve those goals. Agencies were provided with an extensive questionnaire to review prior to a scheduled interview and were encouraged to have as many practitioners as possible provide input into the survey process.

The draft framework organizes these independence goals along a continuum of personal focus from "home to community" into four broad goal sets:

1. Managing basic needs
2. Managing health
3. Managing personal issues and relationships
4. Participating fully as a member of the community

Many of the goals identified through the survey process overlapped or were related. This facilitated the decision to break the goals into sub-goals with associated tasks that the learner might need to complete as they worked towards attaining a particular goal. Sample transition and success markers are included for each sub-goal area. The markers describe integrated activities that the learner completes to demonstrate achievement of the goal. The framework links each sub-goal to the other six essential skill areas and a listing of soft skills that the learner is utilizing in the attainment of the particular goal. In addition to the survey process, a broad range of documents and websites were reviewed.

## **Consultation with the Field**

CLO underwent an extensive consultation process during the project. The draft framework was vetted through the LSA provincial workgroup at two separate stages. It was presented for comments and

feedback at the Deaf Literacy Initiative regional meeting on May 25, 2007. The CLO board of directors reviewed the draft framework and provided feedback in a focus group on May 31, 2007. The draft framework was formally piloted by four community based sites in June 2007 with both practitioners and learners. Finally, the draft framework was presented at the CLO conference on October 12, 2007. Conference participants were given an opportunity to forward questions and comments by email.

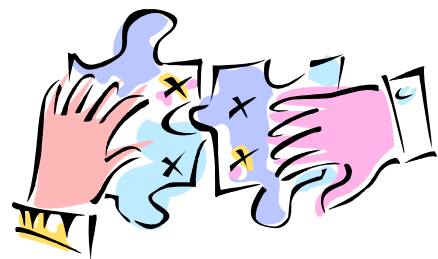
### Features of CLO's draft Independence Framework

1. A global description adapted from the Essential Skills definition but related more specifically to independence has been included for the three key Essential Skills: Reading Text, Document Use and Numeracy.
2. Core skills for each Essential Skill area are also listed. These core skills are a combination of LBS Levels 1-3 skills in the OLC Level descriptors and feedback from the various methods of consultation employed.
3. Critical "soft skills" and other relevant Essential Skills are listed for each goal set and sub goal.
4. For each sub-goal, associated tasks are listed as they relate to the three Essential Skills.
5. Transition and success markers are identified for each sub-goal.

### Relationship to the LSA Framework

Active participation by CLO in ongoing meetings (teleconference and face-to-face) with the LSA Framework Project Development Team supported continuity between CLO's draft Independence Framework and the work of the other five pathway projects.

- ⇒ The format of the framework "foundations for independence" pathway contains all of the components of the broader LSA framework.
- ⇒ The "foundations for independence" pathway encompasses many goal areas where as the other transition pathways specifically describe the learner goal (for example, employment or apprenticeship).
- ⇒ This particular pathway is goal driven so an additional category has been included that identifies sub goals and links them to associated tasks.
- ⇒ Learners with more than one goal path may need to access different parts of the overarching LSA framework.



## LSA Next Steps

Through the LSA Initiative, LBS assessment activities will be more closely tied with the body of research and knowledge associated with the Essential Skills/IALSS levels, which will ensure transparency for learners, practitioners and next step stakeholders in the broader Employment Ontario spectrum. The validation draft of the LSA framework will identify common transitions and core skills that practitioners are already familiar with.

### LSA Initiative Progress To Date

- ⇒ A draft of the “Learner Skill Attainment Framework” has been developed.
- ⇒ Draft core skills lists have been identified for all five transition paths.
- ⇒ Potential valid and reliable tools that relate to the Essential Skills/IALSS scales have been identified for baseline testing.



### Next Steps

Lead projects are currently developing a synopsis of the methodology that was used for their research to be included in the validation draft that will be submitted to MTCU. Sample key transition tasks for each of the five transition pathways are under development. Over the next six months lead project teams from CLO, CESBA and Colleges Ontario will be field testing identified valid and reliable assessment tools with LBS and Academic Upgrading learners. The Preparatory Training Program project team will be providing practitioner training for Communications and Math Employment Readiness Assessment (C.A.M.E.R.A.) in three locations across the province.

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