

Fostering Partnership Development:

An Historical Look at the National Literacy Secretariat Business and Labour Partnership Program





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SECTION 1

Executive Summary

Introduction

Partnership is becoming an ever more present idea as the best way to go about solving social, cultural and economic issues of the day. This partnership dialogue now encompasses adult literacy. However, there is a tendency to use the term loosely or to define it to whatever suits our needs at the moment.

“Canada was the envy of the industrialized world for its creation and innovation around workplace literacy in the 1990s.”

EDUCATION EXPERT

The purpose of this interpretative case study was to document a government initiative through the Human Resources and Social Development Canada’s (HRSDC) National Literacy Secretariat called the Business and Labour Partnership program that has been in existence since 1988. The overall intention was to understand the process of partnership development and the strategies that were used to engage business, labour, literacy practitioners, and provincial and territorial governments in adult work-related literacy at a time when no such program model existed.

The case study focused on a particular program that had a longevity that allowed for important representations of the partnership phenomenon. The primary method for collecting data was through semi-structured interview schedules. Questions were drawn from a literature review that focused on partnership development and program planning. Considerable attention was given to the selection of interviewees from stakeholder groups of business, labour, and government from different regions across Canada. Along with interviewees, other sources of information were used such as archival records, documents that were both print and electronic, and field notes.

Twenty-six, face-to-face interviews were conducted between May and July 2006 and 60 documents were collected. Several techniques

were used in the data analysis path. One of these techniques, categorical aggregation, produced a collection of instances and relevant meanings based on a coding scheme designed from the interview schedules. Eight major themes emerged from the various data sources.

Three periods of time that covered the current life span of the program were used as units of analysis. The first period is referred to as the *foundation building* of the program and included the years 1988 to 1995. The second period is called *development and demonstration* and covers the years from 1996 to 2000. The third time frame is called the period of *program change* and spans the years from 2001 to 2006. In the spring of 2006, the National Literacy Secretariat became the National Office of Literacy and Learning, and the funding program was renamed the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program. For purpose of this project, however, the program name National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) is used throughout the document.

Key Project Findings

Theme 1: Major Accomplishments of the NLS Business and Labour Partnership Program

Between 1988 and 2006, the partnership projects supported by the Program were able to develop assessment and evaluation tools, create innovative models for delivering workplace literacy, support training and consultations, and compile best practices for workplace literacy.

Many projects developed tools for workplace instructors, such as the Organizational Needs Assessment and Literacy Task Analysis. As well, a multi-year project by Bow Valley College and Skillplan developed the groundbreaking Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES).

Support for provincial initiatives laid the foundation for business, labour, and government to work together to create innovative models for delivery. One example is the Workplace Education Manitoba Steering Committee (WEMSC), which has changed the perception of workplace literacy in the province. The model from Manitoba has been adopted in other jurisdictions. In addition, WWestnet organized a number of conferences that became key training events for Canada. Further, a large number of projects compiled best practices for the field. These publications and reports were widely used in Research-in-Practice workshops, practitioner conferences, and clear language trainings.

“Literacy is more complex than just being able to read and write.”

Nova Scotia Federation of Labour. *Lighting the Way with Workplace Education*. Nova Scotia Federation of Labour.

At the root of the program accomplishments was a strategic position held by the NLS premised on a set of core beliefs about the need for capacity building and community development. From this position, key business and labour needs were identified first and the workplace was viewed as an innovative venue for advancing literacy. As the partnership program moved into the development and demonstration years, it enabled and supported new ideas that sprung up from the field and the stakeholders. Another core belief held by the NLS was related to the idea that new knowledge could be created from the accumulation of field practices. During the first and second periods of the program, there was also a focus on exploring new models for the delivery of workplace literacy and essential skills training.

Theme 2: Impacts on Workplace Literacy Practices

During the foundation building years (1988–1995), and the beginning of the development and demonstration period, impacts on workplace literacy were widespread. Many projects focused on customizing a curriculum for a specific worker audience or workplace setting. As well, union training events helped to open up viewpoints and increased awareness about the importance of workplace change. During the period (1996–2000), the NLS-sponsored think tanks encouraged divergent points of view and helped consolidate an emerging field of workplace practice. These think tanks were national forums for all key stakeholders in literacy. Toward the end of this phase and in the beginning of the next period,

the number of practitioner institutes increased. During the period of program change, pockets of best practices were spreading to regions where workplace literacy development was just beginning. Cutting across all three periods was the impact of the National Adult Literacy Database (NALD) as a clearinghouse for current information on workplace education and the impact of both the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLSS).

Theme 3: Definitions of Partnership

There are various types and levels of partnership. There are partnerships with an upper-case “P” and partnerships with a lower-case “p”. Partnerships were found to have common qualities. Members of a successful partnership are trustworthy, persistent in obtaining goals and work in an atmosphere of openness. There is a genuine respect for each member and an acknowledgement of weaknesses. Members are all committed to making the partnership work. In the case of literacy, some type of trigger event, either positive or negative, prompted the formation of a partnership. This event acted as a catalyst for some type of action and led to the careful search for individual partners from business and labour.

Theme 4: Factors of a Successful Partnership with the NLS Business and Labour Program

The importance of visioning the full range of possibilities with the field was considered a factor in building a successful partnership. The complexities of workplace literacy were understood through a social development lens. The search for champions to carry forward this vision, which grew to include essential skills, was also a useful strategy.

Full commitment of all partners including the NLS was a second factor. Commitment of the partners was evidenced by a respect for stakeholder values, differing points of view, and open and frank discussions. At the individual project partnership level, there was also an equal sharing of the workload and a lack of hidden agendas.

Flow of information among partners was another success factor. Knowing the “big picture” which could influence proposal and project development was important. The role of NLS was that of facilitator of information and less like the administrator of regulations.

“The NLS were always looking for a way to say ‘yes’.”

EDUCATION EXPERT

The receptivity of the NLS as a funder to foster business and labour partnerships was also a success factor. This receptivity was characterized by an atmosphere of experimentation and risk taking around projects and an awareness that this was the way to move forward.

The role of the NLS personnel working with partners was another factor. They provided assistance in proposal development, acted as a resource of information, and interpreted policy guidelines for the partners.

A final success factor was the actual structure of the individual projects developed by the partners. Small projects that focused on local needs were important. Business, labour and education partners were the actual drivers of how a project was conducted.

Theme 5: Dynamics of the Business and Labour Partnership Program

At the forefront of these dynamics was the leadership taken by the NLS during the foundation building and development and demonstration periods. They advocated for business and labour projects that came from the “ground”. This leadership helped move the program from a vision to a solid starting point. Strong alliances were formed with provincial and territorial governments and connections among new partners were cemented. Partners felt comfortable in risk taking and experimenting with cutting-edge project ideas related to diverse local needs. Also during these periods, there was a complete openness and trust when negotiating among partners. During the third period, government policy changed and this influenced the dynamics in terms of leadership, risk taking and negotiation styles.

**Theme 6: Proposal and Project Support
Experiences within the Partnership Program**

“The need for essential workplace skills training is high, and such training is on the minds of government, business, labour, educators, and other workplace stakeholders” (p. i).

Ivanochko, B. (2001).
*Learning at Work
Project: Essential
Workplace Skills
Resources 1991-2001.*
Saskatchewan Labour
Force Development
Board.

During the foundation building and development and demonstration periods, there was open dialogue and a regular pattern of reconsideration for project ideas. This encouraged partnership development that was considered a cornerstone of the program. During the period of program change, support and advice for proposal ideas were slower with the one-way communication being more bureaucratic and less responsive to the project goals. Added to this, was the introduction of peer-review committees for proposals.

**Theme 7: Factors of an Unsuccessful Partnership
– Key Stakeholder Voices**

1. Conflicting objectives and hidden agendas during the initial development of a partnership can lead to a failed effort. These challenges can also surface halfway through the process. In a broader sense, when project objectives are tied to accountability rather than social development, there is more room for a disconnect between the partners’ visions and those of the funder.
2. Another factor affecting success is the working relationship among partners. Characteristics that can dampen a partnership and its work are broken trust, a lack of honesty and an unclear flow of information among partners.
3. Power struggles are another factor that can damage partnerships, especially when members do not have an understanding of each other’s organizational cultures.
4. A fourth factor that can contribute to an unsuccessful partnership is program structure barriers. When a partner organization chooses a champion from inside the organization to increase visibility of a workplace literacy issue and that individual leaves the organization, it can have a negative effect on the project work. Rigid reporting requirements and micro attention to project financial accountability can take partners

away from the “real” work and this affects project results and impacts.

Theme 8: Lessons and Program Changes

The most important lesson that can be gleaned from the data sources is that partnership development and sustainability is possible when a funding agency understands the work of the stakeholder organizations and becomes an equal partner in the process. When project work that stems from a partnership is regularly supported, a capacity for networking is established and this can spread across the country.

Over the three periods of time, changes have occurred in the program. Toward the end of the development and demonstration years (1996-2000), there was a subversion of literacy for an essential skills agenda. There was also a loss of momentum on the workplace literacy issue as provincial training agreements with HRSDC were being prepared and signed. In the period of program change (2001–2006), with its introduction of the tier system for project submissions, innovation was defined more rigidly and the concern regarding lack of information flow about policy change from the NLS heightened.

Implications for Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills

Practice

In the absence of a Pan-Canadian literacy strategy and, consequently, of anything resembling a system for adult education, the NLS Business and Labour Partnership Program has been a “system enabler.” The NLS approach to partnership development has provided a framework for the development and delivery of literacy programs in the workplace. This framework is at risk as the focus of the program shifts further and further away from social development objectives.

“Poor literacy levels are a barrier to making changes and improvements needed to compete in today's world” (p. 12).

Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. *Business Results through Literacy*. Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, Ontario Division.

Perhaps one of the lead contributions of the NLS as a system enabler has been the focus on literacy practitioner training and development. Unlike colleagues in other fields of education such as school teachers, college instructors and university professors, literacy practitioners did not generally enjoy recognition as professionals. Aside from lending credibility to workplace-based programs, practitioner training helps to position literacy learning as a legitimate education goal for adults. While there is still room for volunteers, such as peer tutors, they too take part in a training program.

In essence, the NLS approach to partnership has enabled the development of the field of workplace literacy such as we know it today. And this development is comprehensive; it involves promotion and awareness, coordination and information sharing, professional development, research, sharing of best practice models...and in turn the development of further partnerships.

Policy

This case study points to the strategic importance of multi-sector partnerships, for example with business, non-governmental organizations and labour unions in the design and implementation of government policy. Federal involvement in the NLS Business and Labour Partnership Program was based on a commitment to enhancing literacy to improve economic performance and employability. Capacity building, skills development in the workplace and commitment to the creation of new knowledge from the shop floor were the tactics used by the multi-sector partnerships to achieve the federal policy objectives.

The study also reveals that to realize program objectives, the government must explain its “big picture” policy interests. Success in the foundation building and development and demonstration years of the program was due, in part, to the fact that government took time to both research the implications of literacy for the economy and to invest in the dissemination of those results to the partners in order to increase knowledge and spur developments.

A third implication is the importance of policy steadfastness in long-term and slowly evolving fields like literacy and essential skills. This means that once policies are established they must be systematically adhered to in order to succeed. The evidence suggests this objective was accomplished in the foundation building and development and demonstration years and that over time this steadfastness built a productive coalition of partners committed to working in concert to advance the clearly stated literacy policy agenda of the government. During the period of program change the policy objective of achieving literacy gains in the workplace became secondary to the preoccupation with accountability.

Research

“Lifelong learning makes opportunities accessible to all.”

British Columbia
Federation of Labour and
Capilano College.
*Working Together:
Literacy and Lifelong
Learning for Union
Members.* British
Columbia Federation of
Labour.

Findings from this study have provided a rich descriptive perspective of the partnership process. It has also yielded some insights of the factors that could affect the success of partnerships in this area and also some of the potential problems that could arise and mitigate this success. For example, how important is trust and honesty in the process compared to other factors, such as balance of power, building consensus on goals and visioning of the partnership? Another important implication for research is the question of common goals and shared vision of the partnership. How significant is this to successful partnerships in general? The research questions raised by the findings of this study are important as they address the relationships among these factors identified as important in affecting the success or potential failure of such partnerships. Secondly the findings have an overlay of an unfolding process. That is, partnerships evolve over time with unique consequences and outcomes that could affect the overall success of the outcome. But how are these two research issues or questions related?

One fruitful conceptual approach to linking these factors to an unfolding process is to take a life-cycle perspective. Previous research and conceptual thinking in the organizational life-cycle management literature can be a useful way to frame the discussion on research implications from the findings of this study. The notion that organizations move through a process of growth and change

over time is useful to frame the unfolding process of the partnership process as it moves from initial funding to project goals to implementation to final outcomes as described in this study.

This life-cycle perspective also indicates that each phase has its own crisis potential and needed resolution in order for the growth or change to continue. This perspective supports the factors identified in the study as potentially contributing to the success of a partnership, or threatening its survival. The life-cycle perspective of the partnership process can therefore capture both the unfolding of the partnership in phases and also the key factors that could critically impinge on the further progress of the partnership in each phase such as trust, information sharing, goal consensus, power struggles and conflict. This life-cycle perspective can address all three phases, their salient factors, and initiates a theoretical understanding of why these factors are important in the partnership process.



SECTION 2

Introduction

This report represents the results of an interpretive case study conducted from December 2005 to December 2006. Conceptualization of the initial idea, the project purpose, target audiences, and design features evolved over months and included many expert opinions. This narrative report is intended to give readers a deeper understanding of how the National Literacy Secretariat Business and Labour Partnership Program has fostered partnership development since 1988.

What does partnership mean?

Partnership is becoming an ever more present idea as an approach to solving social, cultural and economic issues. It seems that the public and private sectors, business and medicine, education and social services are all contributing to the dialogue about the importance of partnership. However, the actual fostering of partnerships is difficult, especially as it relates to literacy. This topic is seldom discussed among people in government, the funding agencies who encourage partnership development, and the wider literacy community.

There is a tendency to use this term loosely, or to avoid defining it. Partnership represents a significant step beyond cooperation and collaboration but many lack a clear understanding of the partnership development process and its impacts on the community in its broadest sense. Moving away from a more legal or economic notion of partnership, the following quote provided a useful frame of reference for the research project. Poole (1995) defined partnership as:

an association between two or more persons, groups, or organizations who join together to achieve a common goal that neither one alone can

accomplish. This association is characterized by joint membership rights, by democratic participation and by shared responsibility. Each member agrees to contribute to the partnership with the understanding that the possession or enjoyment of the benefits will be shared by all. Partners work hard to strengthen each other and to endure conflict and change, because they recognize that their shared goal extends beyond the reach of any one member. (p.2)

What is interesting about this definition is that it begins to venture into the idea of social partnership. This is an increasingly popular form of collaborative action in which organizations from multiple sectors interact to achieve common goals. It carries the idea of collective strategies, problem-solving networks and tools for action.

The literature abounds with many concepts about partnership as can be seen from our focused review and annotations which are placed at the end of the report as Appendix A. Many of these ideas about partnership principles influenced the project direction and research design and are important to summarize here.

There are many different types of partnership.

1. Partnerships rely more on informal mechanisms and employ unconventional kinds of governance.
2. Leadership is a critical variable in partnership development.
3. Partnerships are characterized by developmental stages, flux, and transformation.
4. Tensions between the formal and informal exist in every partnership relationship.

What was the purpose of this project?

The purpose of this in-depth case study was to document a government initiative through Human Resources and Social Development Canada's (HRSDC) National Literacy Secretariat

called the Business and Labour Partnership Program. The overall intention was to understand the process of partnership development and the strategies that were used to engage business, labour, practitioners, and provincial and territorial governments in adult work-related literacy at a time when no such program model existed. It was also interested in documenting the ideas and approaches that were used as well as the different types of partnerships that developed at a time when most Canadians did not believe that a literacy problem existed. It was felt that this type of information might help demonstrate what a partnership program in real action looked like so that public servants and literacy practitioners could learn from the approach. From an historical point of view, the case study also recorded many of the major events and activities of the partnership program as described by the pioneering people who contributed significantly to Canadian adult work-related literacy.

What was the research design?

For the purpose of the research project, this case study was defined as an empirical inquiry that investigated a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context, especially as the boundaries between the phenomenon and context were not clearly evident (Merriam, 1998). As a qualitative case study, attention was given to three specific features: particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. This case study was particularistic because it focused on a particular program that had a type of longevity which allowed for important representations of the partnership phenomenon. It was also descriptive in that it used prose to describe, elicit images, and analyze the different influences of time on the program. This was done instead of reporting findings in numerical data. As well, the case study was heuristic in that, to some degree, previously unknown relationships and variables emerged which led to a re-thinking of the partnership phenomenon. As a result, there is a different understanding of what happened in the program's life.

The overall intent of the case study was interpretive. In other words, the descriptive data was used to illustrate and support some of the key theoretical positions in the literature of partnership

development and program planning in adult education. The model of analysis was deductive in that certain perspectives were chosen that helped explain partnership development and program planning from very different approaches.

Sampling, Instrument Development and Data Collection

“No project is too small if it helps to answer our own questions about how to improve the teaching and learning of literacies, in the workplace as elsewhere” (p. 290).

Belfiore, M.E., Defoe, T.A., Folinsbee, S., Hunter, J. and Jackson, N.S. (2004). *Reading Work: Literacies in the Workplace*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

In conducting this case study research, the single case, the NLS Business and Labour Partnership Program, was considered the most useful and purposeful. The primary instrumentation was semi-structured interview schedules. These interview questions and probes were developed for two groups of participants—business, labour and education interviewees and government interviewees. Questions for the interview schedules were drawn from a thorough literature review which focused on partnership development and program planning as well as a series of meetings with subject matter experts. The schedules were piloted and further revised and appear as Appendix B and Appendix C.

Considerable attention was given to the selection of the key informants. A matrix was constructed with categories and included the stakeholder groups of business, labour, education and government; regional and organizational affiliations such as national, provincial and territorial; program time periods of 1988–1995, 1996–2000, 2001–2006 and gender. Representation across the matrix categories resulted in a final list of 26 participants. (Appendix D).

A consent form for the interviewees was also developed and appears in Appendix E. Input and feedback on all major decisions concerning the project instrumentation and selection of the interviewees were provided by the National Advisory Committee. Data collection was extensive and drew on multiple sources of information—interviews, field notes, archival records and documents that were both print and electronic. Three project team members conducted the face-to-face interviews between May and July throughout the different regions of Canada. Documents were also collected during the interview process.

Data Preparation and Data Analysis

Recorded interviews and field notes were developed into narratives or stories for each key informant. The narratives were then subjected to a data coding process which appears as Appendix F. Four forms of data analysis were employed so as to make a detailed description of the case and its setting (Merriam, 1998). Categorical aggregation was the first technique used which produced a collection of instances and relevant meanings based on the coding scheme. The next procedure was the establishment of patterns and the correspondence between and among categories. For those single instances that did not fit into the patterns or did not help explain the relationship between categories, direct interpretation was used. As a final technique, generalizations from analyzing the data were developed into an implications section. At the preliminary analysis phase, the National Advisory Committee met to provide additional insights and meaning to the data. Finally, through the process of triangulation the different document data sources which appear in Appendix G were used to corroborate the main findings and shed light on certain themes that emerged. A total of 60 documents were used in this process. These documents were sorted into archival records, project reports, and project deliverables and then further categorized into the three program periods.

Who are the audiences for the case study?

One audience comprises program managers and policy analysts in a wide range of federal, provincial, and territorial government departments. This group may also be looking for innovative ways to promote and integrate adult learning, literacy, and essential skills. They may also be looking for models of partnership development. This case study report, or the other products of this project, may be used as tools to advance the merits of literacy partnership development to their senior executives.

A second audience comprises instructors from public and private training ventures whose work is to support the development of partnerships in its most varied form. Using different parts of the

case study report, these trainers may be able to promote the principles behind sound partnership building and to share this knowledge with program managers engaged in partnership development.

A third audience is workplace educators, such as coordinators and administrators working for labour, business, government or community-based agencies who are interested in forging a true partnership in their different milieus. This group of people can use the various sections of the report to enhance their outreach efforts to potential partners in the community and for making workplace literacy in-roads at the local, provincial and territorial, and federal levels. At a more general level, researchers, non-government organizations, and voluntary groups who are interested in community development capacity may benefit from the case study report or the other deliverables.

How is the report organized?

The case study report is organized into seven major sections. In the Executive Summary the key findings are presented along with the major implications of the study for practice, policy and research. The second section introduces the reader to the idea of partnership, the purpose of the project, and the methods used to collect and analyze the information. In the historical chronology, the reader is provided with an account of the political climate in which the NLS Business and Labour Partnership Program developed and traces the three periods of program time. The fourth section presents the key findings which are described around several major themes. This leads into the next section which offers a number of interpretations of the data drawn from the partnership and program planning literature. The sixth section outlines the implications of the case study from the viewpoints of practice, policy, and research. All of the support material that was used for the project is found in Appendices. An annotated bibliography of the literature review that was conducted along with the tools for data collection and analysis, as well as a list of the documents used, are found in this final part.

Terms

Throughout the report, various terms are used. Partner refers to those individuals representing a business, labour, education or government organization that worked with the National Literacy Secretariat on a collaborative basis. Stakeholder is a word used interchangeably with partner and can include other people in the field such as practitioners, researchers, and literacy experts. The word learner, trainee, employee and adult student are those individuals who have benefited from some type of workplace literacy service.

SECTION 3

An Historical Chronology of the National Literacy Secretariat

September 1984	Progressive Conservatives form government
June 1986	David Crombie, Secretary of State

- October 1, 1986 In the Speech from the Throne, the federal government pledged to establish a national literacy initiative to:
- ...work with provinces, the private sector, and voluntary organizations to develop resources to ensure that Canadians have access to the literacy skills that are the pre-requisite for participation in our advanced economy.*
- 1987 Work begins within the Department of Secretary of State on the literacy issue.
- 1987 The Cedar Glen Declaration: drafted by a coalition of Canadian organizations concerned about *illiteracy* in Canada.
- September 1987 *Broken Words* released, containing articles about literacy that originally appeared in Canadian newspapers. While the survey provided the first real statistic about the state of literacy in the country, interviews with more than 100 literacy workers and learners also put a human face on a problem that affects one in four adults.
- March 1988 David Crombie, Secretary of State, announced \$1 million in literacy funding and creates what was to become the National Literacy Secretariat.

March 1988	Lucien Bouchard, Secretary of State
November 1988	Progressive Conservatives re-elected

CASE STUDY PERIOD 1
Foundation Building (1988–1995)

- 1988–1989 First full year of the National Literacy Secretariat (NLS), Department of the Secretary of State. The mandate was to facilitate the involvement of all sectors of society in creating a more literate Canada. Funding was \$21 million per year.
- September 8, 1988 Prime Minister Brian Mulroney officially launched the National Literacy Secretariat at Frontier College.

January 1989	Gerry Weiner, Secretary of State
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- 1990 United Nations International Literacy Year (ILY).
- 1991 Statistics Canada releases Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities (LSUDA), the first literacy survey to assess real life activities.

April 1991	Gerry Weiner, Minister of Multiculturalism and Citizenship
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- 1991 National Literacy Secretariat is moved to Multiculturalism and Citizenship Canada.
- 1993 National Literacy Secretariat is moved to Human Resources Development Canada—budget was cut by 10% that year.

1993 In its Throne Speech and in its first budget, the Government signalled the importance it attaches to literacy. A promised restoration of funding to the NLS was accomplished.

October 1993 **Liberals form government November 1993**
Senator Joyce Fairbairn named Minister with
Special Responsibility for Literacy

1994 National Literacy Secretariat is given responsibility for the literacy portion of The Atlantic Groundfish Strategy (TAGS) with a budget of \$10 million over five years. With the ongoing responsibility for the Literacy Corps, a \$1 million per year program and the restoration of its budget, the total NLS budget is \$22.3 million per year.

January 1995 Policy Conversation on Workplace and Workforce Literacy held.

1995 The first evaluation of the National Literacy Secretariat is produced (Norpark Consulting).

December 1995 *Literacy, Economy, and Society*, the results of the International Adult Literacy Survey, is released.

CASE STUDY PERIOD 2

Development and Demonstration (1996–2000)

September 12, 1996 *Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada* is released providing the Canadian IALS data.

October 23, 1996 The Minister of Finance announced a 100% GST rebate on books purchased including those purchased by literacy organizations.

1996 *Working in Concert* describes the NLS objective as: *Promote literacy as an essential component for a learning society and to make Canada’s social, economic, and political life more accessible to people with weak literacy skills.*

February 18, 1997 Minister of Finance announces a 30% increase to the NLS budget for family literacy, workplace literacy, and support mechanisms.

June 1997

**Liberals are re-elected
Pierre Pettigrew, Minister of Human Resources
Development**

1997 National Literacy Secretariat no longer reports directly to the Minister with Special Responsibility for Literacy and is now under Minister of Human Resources Development.

August 1999

**Jane Stewart, Minister of Human Resources
Development**

January 2000 The “Grants and Contributions Crisis” begins.

March 2000 Lessons Learned on Adult Literacy, Policies, Programmes, and Practices published by HRDC.

November 2000

Liberals re-elected

CASE STUDY PERIOD 3 Program Change (2001–2006)

2002 Second evaluation of the National Literacy Secretariat (The Governance Network); released in 2004.

2003 Increases made of \$1.5 million a year for 3 years (later becomes ongoing) to the NLS for adult work-related literacy to be part of the Essential Skills and Workplace Literacy Initiative (ESWLI). NLS also received an

additional \$1.5 million for a total of \$7.4 million over 5 years for family literacy, and for minority language communities. This was announced as part of the Official Languages Action Plan.

2003 National Literacy Secretariat now part of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

June 2003 The Standing Committee on Human Resources Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities releases *Raising Adult Literacy Skills The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response*.

December 2003 Joe Volpe, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development

June 2004 Liberals re-elected

**January 2005 Lucienne Robillard, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development
Claudette Bradshaw, Minister of State (Human Resources Development), is assigned lead responsibility for literacy**

February 23, 2005 Minister of Finance commits \$30 million over the next three years, to the National Literacy Secretariat.

“Canada has very high rates of post-secondary education attainment. There remains, however, a relatively large number of working age Canadians who lack the literacy skills required for success in the knowledge-based economy. In recognition of the importance of improving the literacy levels of Canadians, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development (HRSDC) will be working with provinces, territories and stakeholders on the development of a comprehensive strategy in support of literacy and essential skills development. As an initial step, Budget 2005 invests \$30 million over three years to enhance the National Literacy Secretariat’s

(NLS) capacity to further develop partnerships with provinces, territories, business and labour to foster awareness of and involvement in literacy issues and to promote learning in the workplace.”

May 2005 **Belinda Stronach, Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development**

Summer 2005 Minister Bradshaw holds consultations on literacy across the country and appoints an Advisory Committee on Literacy and Essential Skills.

November 2005 *Towards a Fully Literate Canada - Achieving National Goals through a Comprehensive Pan-Canadian Literacy Strategy*, the report of Minister Bradshaw’s Ministerial Advisory Committee on Literacy and Essential Skills. The advisory committee was composed of 19 representatives from the learning, business, labour, voluntary, Aboriginal, and francophone literacy communities.

January 2006 **Conservatives form government**

February 2006 **Diane Finley, Minister of Human Resources and Social Development**

February 2006 National Literacy Secretariat now part of Human Resources and Social Development Canada

March 23, 2006 Treasury Board approved the amalgamation of the Office of Learning Technologies, the Learning Initiatives Program and the National Literacy Program. Now known as the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program (ALLESPP). This becomes effective April 1, 2006.

August 2006 The first Call for Proposals is launched under the new ALLESPP.

September 2006 The ALLESPP is now officially administered by the National Office of Literacy and Learning.

September 25, 2006 Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board cut NLS funding by \$17.7 million which represents the federal-provincial-territorial partnership funding stream that supported community-based literacy projects. ALLESP funds will now be used for projects dealing with literacy activities of national interest.

SECTION 4

Key Project Findings

This section of the report describes the eight major themes that emerged from the various data sources. It begins with a profile of the accomplishments of the Business and Labour Partnership Program and then moves into the impact of these accomplishments on the practice of five partner and interest groups. The third theme focuses on definitions and qualities of partnership development. It is followed by a continuation of the topic by delving into the themes of factors of a successful partnership with the NLS Business and Labour Program, the dynamics of the NLS Partnership Program, and proposal and project support experiences. The next theme depicts the factors that contribute to an unsuccessful partnership and is drawn from the interview data and the key stakeholder experiences with partnership development in general and with the NLS Business and Labour Program. The last theme is called lessons and program changes.

To help contextualize the section, the findings are woven into the three periods of time that cover the current life span of the Business and Labour Partnership Program. The first period is referred to as the foundation building of the program and includes the years from 1988 to 1995. The second period is called development and demonstration and covers the years from 1996 to 2000. The third time frame is called period of program change and spans the years from 2001 to 2006.

Theme 1: Major Accomplishments of the NLS Business and Labour Partnership Program

The first theme that emerged from the data sources describes the accomplishments of the Program. It outlines the beliefs and strategies used by the NLS staff to help develop and sustain partnerships

with business, labour, education, and other government sectors. It also highlights many of the specific projects, activities, and events that were viewed as major accomplishments over its inception.

Early beliefs and strategies that encouraged partnership development

At the root of these accomplishments was a strategic position held by the NLS premised on a set of core beliefs about the need for capacity building and community development. From this position, key business and labour needs were identified first and the workplace was viewed as an innovative venue for advancing literacy. An early strategy for capacity building was the recognition that to be considered a legitimate adult learning enterprise, training of workplace instructors was required.

“There was a dedicated resource to coordinate and manage all the projects.”

BUSINESS AND EDUCATION
EXPERT

On another front, prominent people from government, business, and labour were recruited to lend credibility to this workplace issue. This resulted in consciousness raising that permeated to decision makers, and to some extent, the general public. A by-product of this strategy was that it helped lay the foundation for provincial and territorial government involvement. During these early years, time was spent strengthening federal, provincial, and territorial ties and encouraging the development of regional strategies for workplace literacy.

As the Program moved into the development and demonstration years, it enabled and supported new ideas that sprung up from the field and the stakeholders. Attention was provided in shaping and determining the viability of these potential project ideas, and to avoid a “siloe approach” to development and demonstration, partners in the field were given the opportunity to understand the “bigger picture”. Bringing these people together from the diverse corners of the workplace milieu created a Canadian forum for open discussion. During these same years, another core belief held by the NLS was related to the idea that new knowledge could be created from the accumulation of field practices. Strategies were then created to jump-start the showcasing of innovative workplace literacy models and projects, and later, a search for best practices was initiated.

Specific Projects, Events, and Activities

Illustrative of the many accomplishments of the Program were a number of specific projects, events, and activities. Cutting across all three periods of time was the important issue of assessment and evaluation of workplace learners and programs. Projects that developed specific procedures like the Organizational Needs Assessment and Literacy Task Analysis provided the tools for workplace instructors. Over the years, the issue of assessment has remained contentious and noteworthy for the larger field of literacy as well, and is evidenced with a forthcoming, edited book on *Assessment Practices in Adult Basic Education*.

Support for provincial initiatives through the Program, such as the Workplace Education Manitoba Steering Committee (WEMSC), laid the foundation for business, labour, and government in Manitoba to work together to address the critical needs of workplace literacy. The following excerpt from a recent report chronicles the work and accomplishments of this provincial initiative.

THE IMPACT OF WEMSC: 1991–2006

Since it has been in existence, the impacts of WEMSC have been many and widespread. The results have extended outside Manitoba to other parts of Canada. These impacts fall generally into six broad categories.

- outcomes for program participants
- the development of a culture of literacy and essential skills using joint principles
- practitioner capacity
- ability to leverage additional dollars and contributions
- the influence of the WEMSC model
- integration of the WEMSC model across the provincial government

Source: A Case Study on the WEMSC and its Work: 1991–2006 Summary Report, p. 6.

Key Project Findings

Key events, such as the NLS Policy Consultations on workplace literacy, research, and technology, brought people together with expertise from an evolving field, especially in workplace education. The basic structure of these national consultations focused on a review of past NLS activities on the theme, an analysis of the roadblocks encountered, and a vision of the next five to ten years. These events took place during the period of development and demonstration and were held in high esteem by all stakeholders. Conferences organized by WWestnet over the three periods of time were also considered key training events for new partners and already established partners. This is indicated in the following citation from a recent WWestnet Impact report.

SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

Respondents rated WWestnet's efforts as a broker of workplace essential skills as highly effective. WWestnet's objectives were rated as very consistent with those of the workplace essential skills community. WWestnet's role in improving the workplace essential skills of western Canadians was rated as very necessary and 71% reported that WWestnet's conferences and events were highly relevant.

A combined total of 78% of respondents felt that WWestnet reached its target audience very well or somewhat well. When asked about the history of Workplace Essential Skills, 98.5% rated the importance as somewhat or very important and nearly 78% said they used historical information. Respondents overwhelmingly felt that information on different perspectives (Business, Labour, Aboriginal and Apprenticeship) was very important.

Source: Measuring the Impact: WWestnet Conferences 2000–2005. Final Report, p.9.

As the exploration of new models for delivery at the workplace continued during the first and second periods of time, an innovative approach created by the labour sector became popular. The Basic Education and Skills Training (BEST) program, which was started by the Ontario Federation of Labour, attracted a great deal of attention and interest due to its focus on labour peer teaching and

functional curriculum development. This model spread to other provinces—Saskatchewan as the WEST program, and British Columbia as JUMP. Also, throughout the last two periods of the Business and Labour Partnership Program, a key activity sponsored by the Conference Board of Canada recognized the outstanding program efforts made by business. The annual Conference Board of Canada Excellence in Workplace Literacy Awards and its accompanying Directory of Canadian programs continues to be a cornerstone for the field of workplace education.

“TOWES is the best measure of essential skills in Canada.”

Bow Valley College.
(2006). *Test of Workplace Essential Skills*. Bow Valley College
(homepage [<http://www.towes.ca/home.aspx>]).

Another project that spanned the last two Program periods was the development of the Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES). This work was groundbreaking for many reasons. It built on a major HRSDC research initiative that identified the nine essential skills required for entry-level jobs across a wide range of employment sectors. Bow Valley College led this multi-year project with Skillplan, (BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council) in the initial years, and the test itself, which is used by all stakeholder groups across the country, has also attracted attention outside of Canada. This work has also been instrumental in the twinning of essential skills with workplace literacy.

In addition, many projects over the three periods of time have resulted in publications or reports that were used for specific training activities and events. For example, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters “Business Results through Literacy” publication has been used with many businesses that were looking for a starting point into workplace literacy. The Research-in-Practice workshops have help practitioners to understand the writing process so as to submit their publications to the journal *Literacies*. Other reports have also been used in the workplace education practitioner conferences in Nova Scotia, while the Sector Councils have produced manuals in healthcare, pulp and paper, oil and gas. The same is true for the clear language movement.

Theme 2: Impacts on Workplace Literacy Practices

This section of the report describes the impacts of some of the specific projects and activities that were drawn from the data sources. Impacts were felt by five groups of people involved in workplace literacy and essential skills: business organizations and employers; labour organizations and their local constituents; educational practitioners and experts; program participants, and the community at large. These impacts also cover the three periods of time of the Business and Labour Partnership Program.

“Underlying every education program is a particular vision of society and what it means to be human.”

Connor-Unda, J. (2001).
*Seeds for Change:
A Curriculum Guide for
Worker-centred Literacy.*
Canadian Labour
Congress.

During the foundation building years (1988–1995) and the beginning of the development and demonstration period, impacts on workplace literacy practices were widespread. Many projects focused on customizing a curriculum for a specific worker audience or workplace setting. For example, during this period, the BEST program became a beacon for other Federations of Labour. As well, union training events helped to open up viewpoints, and overall, increased awareness about the importance of workplace change. As a result, recognition that ESL was a workplace training need surfaced. Much of the knowledge gained from these activities and projects was disseminated through the International Workplace Learning conferences and plain language forums that were popular at the time.

During the development and demonstration period (1996-2000), the NLS-sponsored think tanks encouraged divergent points of view and helped consolidate an emerging field of workplace practice. These think tanks were national forums for all key stakeholders in literacy. During this period, new workplace structures were created, as was the case with the Directors of Training Centres from one labour organization who formed a national committee to help coordinate labours’ response to the literacy issue. The model of consortia, provincial project teams, and steering committees developed and became successful vehicles for leveraging and bargaining for more resources in the community. The following excerpt from a recent WEMSC report describes this.

A PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT STRATEGY FOR ESSENTIAL SKILLS, NEW AREAS OF DEVELOPMENT, AND THE ABILITY TO LEVERAGE ADDITIONAL DOLLARS

Another area of impact is the ability of WEMSC to leverage additional dollars as a result of the original partnership. In the first decade of WEMSC, this included leveraging dollars from Labour Market Language Training through Human Resources Development Canada, and later from the provincial government for program delivery. Within the last five years, the money that WEMSC has been able to leverage has increased ten-fold from both sources across the provincial government as well as the federal government. In-kind contributions from business and labour have been enormous through, for example, program development time, time off for worker training, and contributions of space and materials.

Source: A Case Study on the WEMSC and its Work: 1991–2006. Summary Report, p.8.

A deeper understanding of how to integrate literacy into apprenticeship and Sector Council training needs also developed. This approach was well received and brought together people who had never collaborated on projects before. Many of these experiences are documented in the publication *Changing Landscape of Workplace Education*.

Toward the end of this period, and in the early years of the following period, additional impacts occurred. In some provinces, such as Nova Scotia, workplace instructors sought to professionalize their practices through the creation of the Association of Workplace Educators of Nova Scotia (AWENS). The now widely used TOWES also increased educational credibility. In addition, national organizations, such as ABC Canada, investigated patterns of literacy participation, and based on the results, revised its national LEARN campaign to better address the gaps in reaching out to adult literacy learners.

In the third period, the period of program change (2001–2006), pockets of best practices were spreading to regions where workplace literacy development had just started up. For example, Nova Scotia field officers were training other Atlantic province field

officers on how to conduct Organizational Needs Assessments and Educational Needs Assessments. Strategies that had been used to encourage Sector Council involvement in active provinces were now being considered by provinces in their own period of development. In other regions of the country, such as Manitoba and Nova Scotia, the sheer increase in workplace education programs provided support for building a case with provincial governments and the release of additional resources. Training modules for practitioners and union stewards were now being revised to reflect the changes in economics, demographics, and special interest groups of workplace learners. New insights on the lived experiences of workers and how they use literacy at work were published in the book *Reading Work*. Empirical studies with a focus on labour and workplace literacy, funded through the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and the NLS Joint Initiative Valuing Literacy in Canada, were well underway during this period.

Cutting across all three periods was the impact of the National Adult Literacy Database as a clearinghouse for current information on workplace education and the impact of both the International Adult Literacy Survey and the Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey. Business, labour, and education groups used this information to attract attention to literacy as a workplace issue. In addition, conferences and training events sponsored through WWestnet continued. These are described in the following excerpt.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

... Specially the six events were:

1. Productivity, Employment and Essential Skills (November 2000)
2. Taking it to the Street: Incorporating Essential Skills into your Training Agenda (April 2002)
3. Destination Integration: Incorporating Essential Skills into Employment Preparation Programs (February 2003)
4. Taking the Next Steps Together: A Collaborative Approach to Workplace Essential Skills Development (February 2004)
5. Essential Skills and the Northern Oil and Gas Workforce (May 2005)
6. Measuring Success: International Comparisons and Bottom Lines (June 2005)

... Many conference attendees participated in multiple sessions – a total of 284 individuals participated in one or more of the six events. Of those 72 responded to the on-line survey. The survey posed 31 questions designed to gauge changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, and practice. Responses clearly indicated that participants value the work that has been done by WWestnet and that, as an organization, WWestnet should continue to provide opportunities for networking and information exchange among members of the workplace essential skills community.

Theme 3: Definitions of Partnerships

In this theme, different perspectives of what a partnership means for business, labour, education, and government members are presented. To begin with, there are various types and levels of partnership. There are partnerships with an uppercase “P” and partnerships with a lowercase “p”. These types can be symbolic or

based solely on funding. They also can be considered of primary importance or secondary importance to the partner members. Some partnerships are more formal with legal terms of agreement, or informal with only verbal terms of conduct. What is common in partnerships is that they are complex and slightly different each time one is formed.

“The Program Champion needs to know what he or she stands for and what the program will stand for” (p. 4).

Evans, S., Twiss, D. and Wedel, R. *British Columbia Pulp and Paper Industry's Experience in Implementing a Worker Focused Learning Program in the Workplace: The LEAP Experience (Learning and Education Assisted by Peers)*. British Columbia Federation of Labour.

Partnerships also have a common set of qualities. Members of a successful partnership are trustworthy, persistent in obtaining goals, and work in an atmosphere of openness. There is a genuine respect for each member and an acknowledgement of weaknesses. Members are all committed to making the partnership work. In most workplace cases, some type of trigger event, either positive or negative, prompts the formation of a partnership. This event acts as a catalyst for some type of action and leads to the careful search for individual partners from business and labour. Sometimes this search points to a prominent person in the community who can help champion the issue.

From the various data sources, a picture emerged of how partnerships developed. In the initial phase of a successful partnership, the focus remains on defining its mission. A shared vision and common goals also emerge in this phase. Through a sharing of expertise and a consideration of individual and organizational circumstances, common ground rules and principles are laid down to further guide the partnership into the next phase of development. As the project work of the partnership continues, an increased awareness of stakeholder diversity becomes more apparent. Values and philosophies of the partners come to bear as decisions are made and a mutual trust and respect for these differing views develop. Also, in this phase of the partnership process, transparency occurs.

This happens because a common language is used among partners. Regular clarification of partner mandates is no longer needed. Stakeholder voices are heard and blended into the project work.

Related to this quality of transparency is the balance of power. Partners see themselves as having an equal footing in the decision-making process. When tensions arise, conflicts are dealt with

mostly through consensus. No one person has more power than another. When the balance of power is in check, the comfort level to take collective risks increases. As project work begins to show results, a connectedness among the partners further deepens. There is a recognition that the coordinated skills and tools that have been brought to the partnership table are effective in achieving action. In most cases, there is a common sentiment that relationships which have developed in doing the project work are beneficial to all stakeholders and may be useful to draw upon at some later time. Successful completion of the project work and goals signals the end of the partnership or the re-establishment of a new partnership cycle under different conditions and circumstances.

Theme 4: Factors of a Successful Partnership with the Business and Labour Program

This theme further elaborates the notion of successful partnerships, but with more of a focus on how these partnerships developed through the NLS Business and Labour Partnership Program. Several factors are discussed in relation to the three time periods. The importance of visioning the full range of possibilities with the field was considered a factor in building a successful partnership with the NLS. During the foundation building phase there was a social development approach used to understand the complexities of workplace literacy in the broadest sense. The intricacies and difficult issues that surfaced as project work got off the ground were always at the forefront of discussions. This visioning continued into much of the second period along with a recognition that a new field of knowledge was emerging. The search for more champions to carry forward this vision also continued as the new agenda now included essential skills. A tier system was developed during the period of program change which gave priority to national projects over provincial, territorial, and local ones.

A second success factor was related to the full commitment of all the partners including the NLS. For both the foundation building and development and demonstration years, commitment of the partners was evidenced by a respect for stakeholder values,

differing points of view, and open and frank discussions. Each partnership project involved an equal sharing of the workload and a lack of hidden agendas. During the period of program change, this sense of commitment was not as solid, with stakeholders repeating the need to evaluate how this Business and Labour Partnership Program was actually happening.

“The descriptions and examples use the language of HRSDC’s Essential Skills Profiles, which have become the standard in addressing workplace writing in Canada”

*British Columbia
Construction Industry
Skills Improvement
Council: Resources for
Essential Skills at Work.
British Columbia
Construction Industry
Skills Improvement
Council.*

Also central to the successful partnership with the NLS was the flow of information among members. Knowing the “big picture” which could influence proposal and project development was important. For the first and second periods of time, the NLS acted as a facilitator of information and less like an administrator of regulations. Mechanisms for dialogue were plentiful and as national training trends and policies shifted partners were close to the ever-changing information. During the period of program change, there was a need for resource people in regions where provincial offices in workplace literacy did not exist. However, funding was not allocated for additional staff. As review committees for proposals were put in place, feedback to unsuccessful applicants did not always occur, but when it did, it was characterized by long waiting periods.

The receptivity of the NLS as a funder to foster business, labour, and education partnerships was also a success factor. During the first and second periods, there was an atmosphere of experimentation and risk taking around projects and an awareness that this was the way to move forward, as opposed to the more rigid structures of the United States’ Workplace Literacy Initiative. This receptivity of field ideas that did not have to be “all the same size” helped to build strong alliances among stakeholders. In the period of program change, this receptivity was less flexible and more administrative.

Closely related to this factor was the role of the NLS personnel, who during the foundation building and development and demonstration years provided assistance in proposal development, acted as a resource of information, and interpreted policy guidelines for the partners. These personnel provided the stability in the NLS despite the number of changes in the administration of the department. They were committed to helping local communities identify models

Key Project Findings

of workplace literacy that suited their regions and directed stakeholders into other innovative practices across the country through a vast web of connections. This role changed in the third period with more of a focus on accountability.

A final success factor was the actual structure of the individual projects developed by the partners. During the foundation building and development and demonstration years, smaller projects that focused on local needs were important. Business, labour and education partners were the actual drivers of how a project was conducted. Built into the project structure was an access to the NLS staff and a certain amount of leeway around deadlines as funding was provided in the form of a grant. During the third period, at the funder organizational level, additional layers of structure were added, such as proposal review committees, attention to internal project evaluation, and the introduction of more formal contribution agreements. These structures moved the focus to accountability and away from the issues surrounding the project content.

Theme 5: Dynamics of the Business and Labour Partnership Program

As a continuation of the previous section, this theme area delves into another level of information about the more specific dynamics of this partnership with the NLS Business and Labour Partnership Program over the three time periods. At the forefront of these dynamics was the leadership taken by the NLS during the foundation building and development and demonstration years. They advocated for business and labour projects that came from the ground. This leadership helped move the program from a vision to a solid starting point. They provided information to the stakeholders in terms of what was happening nationally, which helped to further develop the individual partnership projects. Strong alliances were formed with provincial governments, and connections among new partners continued to happen. At the same time, project accountability was always present but did not overshadow workplace issues.

Key Project Findings

Also during these two periods of time, all partners felt comfortable in risk-taking behaviours. Cutting-edge project ideas were encouraged and reflected unique and diverse local needs. This was an era of experimentation. Although business, labour, and education partners recognized that the NLS held the purse strings, they provided an openness toward interpreting program guidelines. Coupled with this risk taking, came a certain style of negotiation among partners. During these same time periods, there was a complete openness and trust when negotiating among partners. Rooted in the local needs of the community, projects had a practice-oriented focus and stakeholders felt they owned their projects. There was a sense of balance between framing project ideas and the parameters of the funding arrangements. All partners understood the funding spirit of the law as opposed to the letter of the law.

During the third period of time, government policy changes influenced the dynamics of the fostering of partnerships in terms of leadership, risk taking, and negotiation styles. As the delivery mechanisms for the NLS Business and Labour Partnership Program changed, the balance of power among partners also changed, especially for advocating local needs. Reciprocity was different because of a top-down accountability ethos, and business and labour organizations became frustrated trying to figure out the government priorities. The partnership dynamics were tarred with the federal government's accountability chaos.

Theme 6: Proposal and Project Support Experiences within the Partnership Program

During the foundation building and development and demonstration years, a great deal of freedom was exercised in proposals and projects. When a project idea was outside the program guidelines, advice was given regarding how to rethink or revisit the ideas. This also encompassed proposal revisions around the project budget. In general, there was open dialogue and a regular pattern of reconsideration. This encouraged partnership development and was considered a cornerstone of the program. When funding constraints occurred, some partners who had had a track record of successful

Key Project Findings

projects continued in their developmental work. In other instances, these funding constraints discouraged the establishment and progress of new partnerships.

During the period of program change, support and advice for proposal ideas were slow coming and in the form of top-down communication. This process became more bureaucratic and less responsive to the project goals. As a result, two main perceptions developed from the field. One perception was that well-established partnerships were being favoured over newly formed ones. The other perception was that these newly-formed partnerships were not even given a chance to get off the ground. In addition, the tier system, which prioritized the type of applicants, knocked some partners off the playing field. Other partners did not have the capacity to conform to the new complicated contribution agreements. Added to this were the peer-review committees for proposals which required different writing skills and time commitments. These new program features changed the way some organizations went about the business of workplace literacy. These changes were partially responsible for transforming the Business and Labour Program into a narrower model for partnership development.

Theme 7: Factors of an Unsuccessful Partnership: Key Stakeholder Voices

This theme area depicts the four key factors that contributed to an unsuccessful partnership. The information for this section is drawn primarily from the interview data and the key stakeholder experiences with partnership development in general, and with the Business and Labour Program. Conflicting objectives and hidden agendas during the initial development of a partnership can lead to a failed effort. These characteristics can also surface halfway through the process. As well, a lack of agreement on basic working principles while formulating the groundwork can also derail a partnership. If the direction of the partnership goals changes without the consensus of the other partners, it can turn into a one-person show. When these circumstances occur, the project work is

Key Project Findings

shaky. Overall, when project objectives are primarily tied to accountability, there is little room to advance the social development approach to workplace literacy and essential skills.

“The staff took a very proactive approach.”

LABOUR EXPERT

Another factor affecting success is the working relationship among partners. Characteristics that can dampen a partnership and its work are broken trust, a lack of honesty, and an unclear flow of information among partners. At some point in the partnership development process, norms are formed in the group and need to be followed. For example, if there is an imbalance of work among partners, it can then affect the relationship.

Also, if an additional partner is brought in after the group norms have been established, this can negatively affect the project work.

Related to this, is the factor of power struggles. Power struggles can damage partnerships, especially when members do not have an understanding of each other’s organizational cultures. Struggles can also begin early in the process when operating principles or formal agreements are broken or not followed. Power struggles can be verbal or non-verbal and can also occur when a funder controls the partnership. When a partner member loses sight of compromise, it is usually an indication of a power struggle waiting to happen.

The fourth factor that can contribute to an unsuccessful partnership is structural barriers. When a partner organization chooses a champion from inside the organization to increase visibility of a workplace literacy issue and that individual leaves the organization, it can have a negative effect on the project work. As well, when funding policies change and bureaucrats appear cold and distant, this type of liaison can have a negative impact on the partnership development process. The same holds true when there is uncertainty and flux around program funding changes. Potential partners end up just waiting around and energy decreases. Rigid reporting requirements and micro attention to project financial accountability can take partners away from the “real” work and this affects project results and impacts.

Theme 8: Lessons and Program Changes

“Poor literacy levels are a barrier to making changes and improvements needed to compete in today’s world” (p. 12).

Business Results through Literacy, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, Ontario Division.

The most important lesson that can be gleaned from the data sources is that partnership development and sustainability are possible when a funding agency understands the work of the stakeholder organizations and becomes an equal partner in the process. When this occurs, a sense of trust develops among the partners leading to full engagement in building the endeavour. This results in ‘real’ partnerships being formed and people doing their jobs better.

When project work that stems from a partnership is supported, a capacity for networking is established and this can spread across the country. This work is further facilitated when champions for a workplace literacy issue are called in to help carry the message forward. Helpful to this process, as well, is when the funding partner can act as the “cushion on politics”. In other words, the funding partner navigates the related government-of-the-day issues without burdening the funding recipients. This specific Business and Labour Partnership Program has taught the country what partnership is all about because they were very aware of the delicacy of arrangements and used their role as a type of broker to facilitate change rather than direct it.

Over the three periods of time, changes have occurred. Toward the end of the development and demonstration years (1996–2000), there was an integration of literacy with a national essential skills agenda. In the period of program change (2001–2006), and the introduction of the tier system for project submissions, innovation was defined more rigidly and the concern about lack of information flow about policy change from the NLS heightened. New review committee structures increased federal accountability, and reporting requirements seemed to take precedence over real workplace issues and proposal ideas. Added to this was the change from a granting system for partnership projects to a contribution system that took up more time and resources of the partner organizations. The larger organizational partnerships were able to manage these contributions, but the smaller organizations were more pressed for funds and bowed out quietly. These changes, in turn, impacted the amount of early attention that was needed to develop and sustain relationships with the different stakeholder groups.

SECTION 5

Making Sense of the Findings through Various Models

This section of the report may be useful for readers who are looking for models to use that foster partnership development in their own associations, groups, or organizations. Since no program model existed at the outset of the Business and Labour Partnership Program, this section attempts to interpret aspects of the findings through six models or lenses. These were purposely chosen to illustrate a broad range of perspectives that could be used to understand the intricate processes and strategies of partnership development.

“How can creativity and innovation be done in rigid frameworks?”

LITERACY EXPERT

There are two main parts to this section. Using the data from the case study, the first part begins with three different types of interpretations which are drawn from the partnership development literature. Since various disciplines explore the details of this concept in different ways, a cross section of the literature was selected from comparative education research, community-based participatory research, and public policy research.

In the first model, The Partnership Development Continuum, the reader will see how the Business and Labour Partnership Program moved across a continuum that met partner organizations at their own particular stage and time of development. The second model, Partnership Working, provides the reader with a generic framework for examining the key ingredients of how the Business and Labour Partnership Program worked. Another lens in the section is referred to as Group Dynamics Within Partnerships. This model provides the reader with a way of viewing partnership effectiveness through group dynamics.

The next part continues the interpretation, but through the lens of program planning models in adult education. Again, three different

approaches are used to illustrate different perspectives, planning issues, and roles and behaviours of partner members. In the Conceptual Programming Model, the reader is provided with a macro-level analysis of how the Business and Labour Partnership Program operated. This is followed by a discussion of the Interactive Model of Program Planning. Here, the reader can see how certain steps were taken to form a partnership and an individual workplace project. The final lens, Negotiation Model of Program Planning, provides the reader with a viewpoint of how the Business and Labour Partnership Program worked within the context of power relations. It is important to note that these six models and interpretations are not intended to assess how well the Program performed, but more to provide a variety of viewpoints that could be considered, or might be similar to the contexts of readers involved in the journey of partnership development.

The Partnership Development Continuum

This model is based on the idea that the optimal relationship in any partnership process is one that recognizes that members have needs and local realities at a particular stage and time in their organizational development (Mullinix, 2001). It also recognizes that if co-ordinated efforts and goals are to be attained, there needs to be a strategic movement along a partnership continuum. This three-phase continuum includes: pre-partnership, partnership, and Partnership. Nine dimensions or indicators of partnership relations that vary across the continuum were also identified and appear as Figure 1. These dimensions map across the partnership continuum and form a fluid matrix that may help explain the fostering of partnerships within the NLS Business and Labour Partnership Program.

FIGURE 1 – PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT CONTINUUM

Dimensions	pre-partnership	partnership	Partnership
Focus of interaction			
Activities/projects			
Time and orientation			
Benefit			
Trust and respect			
Organizational structures			
Organizational strategies			
Locus of influence			
Written agreements			

The First Phase — pre-partnership

During this stage on the continuum, the focus of interaction was to bring business and labour organizations together for the first time. This was a feature characterized throughout the foundation building years (1988–1995). An example of such a partnership type was the one formed between the United Food and Commercial Workers and Algonquin College to develop a workplace tool called Literacy Task Analysis. These initial interactions were mostly facilitated through the NLS personnel involved in the Business and Labour Partnership Program. The project activities were based on local needs and specifically defined relationships among members, so they could become acquainted with each other’s organizations. To start with,

the length and time of these associations were more of a pilot stage nature but project objectives were specific enough to start the knowledge-building process. The benefits were the important network exchanges that took place among these newly formed partnerships and the recognition of the skills and knowledge each member organization could bring to a specific workplace literacy challenge.

“At the end of the partnership, you come out with something that’s bigger than any of us.”

LABOUR EXPERT

During the pre-partnership, there was a focus on building trust and earning respect for a different organizational approach to the same issue or problem. Even though member organizational structures remained autonomous, different strategies from each partner were brought to the table to complete the projects or activities. This new information was shared among member organizations, and the different partners began to recognize how project results influenced their own interests as well as each other’s.

Written agreements were made between the funding agency and the partner members after project proposals were approved. Working principles as to how the partnership would function were often verbally stated. When a successful pilot project was completed during these foundation building years, many of these same stakeholders strategically moved into the next phase of the continuum. As well, some partnerships did not progress beyond a pilot phase yet still considered their work to be successful. As awareness of the NLS program grew among business and labour organizations over the years, new groupings began the pre-partnership phase in the development and demonstration years and to some extent in the period of program change.

The Second Phase – partnership

The second phase on the continuum is “partnership.” Although this type of partnership has probably occurred over the three periods of time, it may be more typical during the developmental and demonstration years. An example of such a partnership type is the one formed between Bow Valley College and Skillplan, the BC Construction Industry Skills Improvement Council, to develop and launch TOWES. In these types of partnerships, more attention and time were allocated to achieve mutually-valued objectives. In some

instances, the early work in a pre-partnership or a pilot project allowed members to further access information about the national workplace literacy picture and to integrate new project objectives into changes occurring in each partner organization. Partners recognized that this was an opportunity to work together because it was convenient arrangement and the project goals aligned with the changes occurring in their own organizations. These projects were often more specified with longer term objectives. Each member of the partnership usually gave more resource time, and this increased capacity to meet the goals of the project.

“We have been guided in this work by many teachers, researchers and theorists around the world who have been talking for nearly two decades about a paradigm shift in thinking about the nature of literacy itself” (p. 4).

Belfiore, M.E., Defoe, T.A., Folinsbee, S., Hunter, J. and Jackson, N.S. (2004). *Reading Work: Literacies in the Workplace*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Together the partner organizations were able to do more. Mutual trust and respect moved beyond the individual partners and spread to other staff in the business, labour, and education organizations. Sometimes, activities and tasks around the shared objectives provided opportunities to participate in each other’s organizational functions, such as seminars and symposiums. Information flow among members was more coordinated and strategies to accomplish the project work became blended. The exchange of information increased and added to building capacity to work at a problem. There was also a search for other people and organizations who could use the project information. Specific roles of each partner and respective organization tended to be more focused on the implementation of the project results. Occasionally, agreements or partner contracts were written.

The Third Phase – Partnership

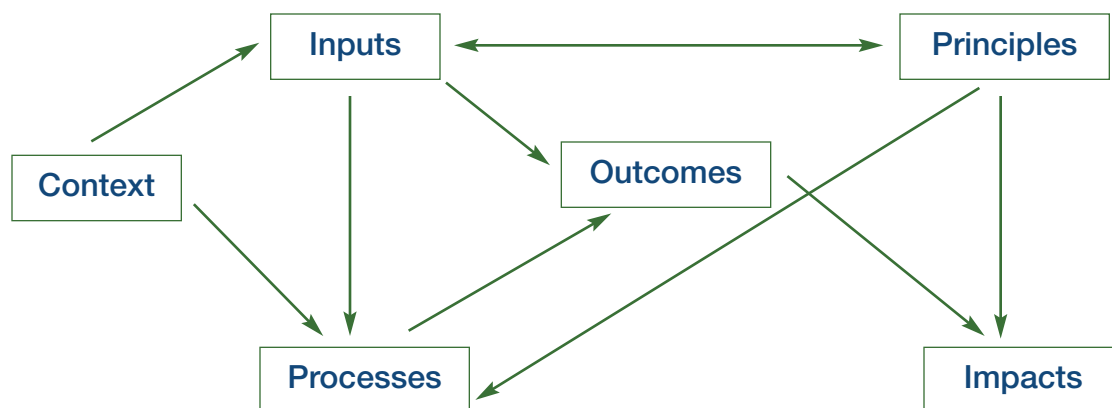
The third phase on the continuum is “Partnership.” An example of such a partnership type was the one formed between the Ontario Federation of Labour and the provincial government to operate BEST. The focus of interaction was more on developing and implementing the project together. The project activities grew directly out of a common set of interests and skills. There was more of a mission orientation and goals were more open-ended. Benefits of this type of partnership were increased status because of field recognition. Member organizations were able to become more than what they would be alone. The mutual trust and respect permeated through parts of each other’s organizations and there was sometimes

an invitation to sit on each other's committees or boards or to provide advice on different types of organizational work. Strategies to complete and implement the work were developed together as well as marketing the product or project results. Partner organizations acknowledged each other's expertise and ability to build capacity to address and solve the critical issue or problem at the workplace. Agreements tended to focus on a broader area of mutual interest and a commitment to work together.

Partnership Working

There is also a growing body of literature that describes attempts to foster collaboration in the planning and delivery of public services and seeks to identify generic aspects of the process. One such approach has been documented by Asthana, Richardson and Halliday (2002) that looks at a framework which captures the key ingredients of partnership working. This framework will be used here as a reporting structure to illustrate some of the main themes that have emerged from this case study. The framework for examining partnership working is presented in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2 – A FRAMEWORK FOR EXAMINING PARTNERSHIP WORKING



The Context of Partnership Working

“Most likely to receive training – are urban businesses and those with a higher number of employees”

*Workplace Literacy:
Who, What, Where,
When, Why, How.
Saskatchewan Labour
Force Development
Board.*

The geographical context played an important role in how and when partnerships were developed and sustained. Certain regions and localities across the country were more able to take advantage of the Business and Labour Partnership Program than others. Awareness of literacy issues in the workplace by business and labour happened at different times and regions of Canada. As well, when local communities had a long history of community development and a well-established network that had already been fostered by previous types of partnerships, this positively affected the readiness to become involved in the Business and Labour Partnership Program.

The political context also had a bearing on how and when partner members were able to co-ordinate action. During the foundation building and development and demonstration years, local energies were harnessed and innovation and risk taking were promoted. These early wins acted as a springboard for further development of different partnership arrangements among the stakeholders. As an emphasis on national and provincial priorities shifted throughout the duration of the program, so did the focus of the partnership working. More recently, the top-down political agenda on accountability was at odds with the building of sustainable partnerships from the bottom up. This change affected the trust of partner organizations.

Inputs to Partnership Working

A key input was the recognition and acceptance of a need for partnership among members. Identifying real needs at the changing workplace was the motivation for partner organizations to come together. Exchanging relevant information about the workplace changes from different stakeholder viewpoints helped to develop alliances and raised awareness. This input provided a catalyst for real commitment on the ground.

Another input was the provision of resources. This tangible support was provided by the Business and Labour Partnership Program in terms of partnership project funding, a staff dedicated to the process of partnership building and, later, more formal committee structures

intended to reflect a political imperative of accountability. During the foundation building and development and demonstration years, there was strategic support for local partnerships and this helped to build the reputation of the Business and Labour Partnership Program. Other resources in their own right were the knowledge and skills that accumulated as partnerships began to work.

Active leadership was also a critical input in determining the extent and pace of partnership development. Leadership occurred both at the NLS level and at the partner organization level. Individual personalities were a dimension of this good leadership. Related to this was the autonomy around decision making which happened as partnerships continued to spread. Establishing linkages with other organizations and deepening an understanding of the issues connected to workplace literacy were also viewed as leadership strategies.

Processes of Partnership Working

“They enabled us to support and work as a catalyst in education programs.”

BUSINESS AND EDUCATION
EXPERT

Knowledge and information sharing were of central importance to the building of partnerships. This was horizontal across all partners in the form of dialogue and consultation. Networking both formally and informally strengthened the partnerships. “Big” decisions, such as the allocation of funds were made inside the partnership meetings.

Differences of opinions were valued in the decision-making process with very little conflict and more of a consensus-building approach. In most cases, partnership cultures developed that were different than their individual organizational cultures. Individual project accountability for decisions and activities were entrusted to all partners. As well, reporting requirements to the funder were clear during the foundation building and development and demonstration years. In the period of program change, demonstrating accountability became more complex and this variation confused partners.

Partnership Principle

The inclusion principle was a cornerstone for fostering partnerships. This principle allowed equal representation from the relevant

Making Sense of the Findings

stakeholder groups, resulting in partnerships that were more manageable in decision making and project management. As the tier system came into place, however, during the period of program change, principles of access and representation were called into question. Small community groups and representatives with local needs were distanced as priorities shifted to the call for large-scale projects from national organizations and consortia.

Outcomes

One key outcome has been the sharing of principles, knowledge and understanding about workplace literacy and essential skills training. Partners agreed that each member organization learned about the aims and philosophies of the other member organizations and now better appreciate their organizational ethos. Another outcome was the cumulative dialogue with partners around workplace change and literacy and how this moved into a wider training agenda. In addition, partners established criteria that focused on how the project work was progressing and what was proving difficult. This was empowering to the partnership members. Being able to take action in an autonomous way and to build on successes helped to further the development of the Business and Labour Partnership Program.

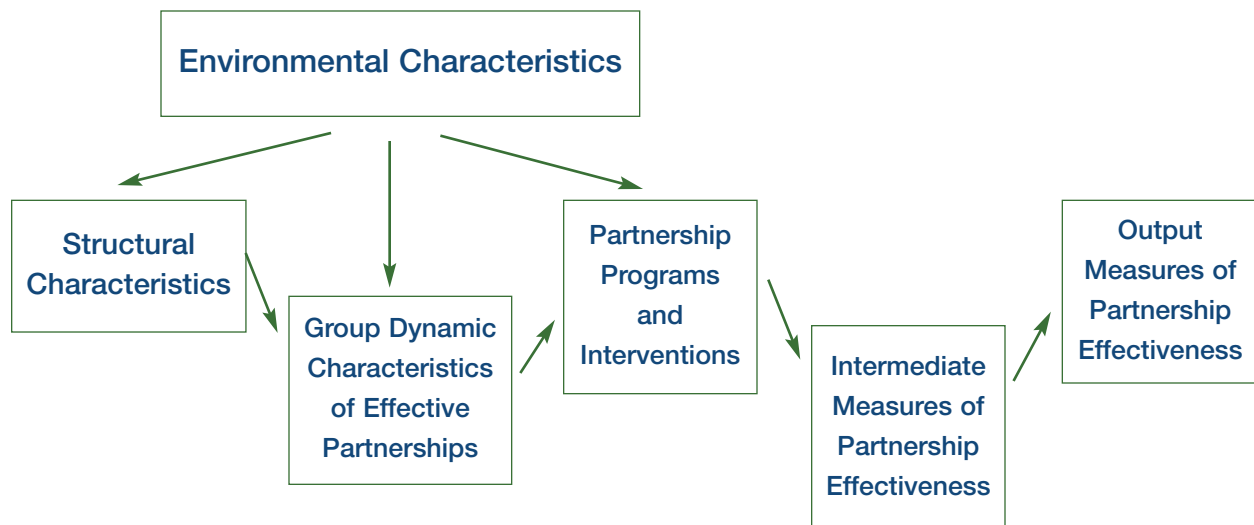
Impacts

As mentioned in the previous section, five groups were impacted by the work of the program: business organizations and employers; labour organizations and their local constituents; educational practitioners and experts; and program participants and the community at large. One of the impacts of the program was that there was greater synergy among stakeholder organizations. There was also more choice for organizations in terms of how to take action when the issue of literacy at work surfaced. Innovative tools, procedures and learning materials were all products from different partnerships. As well, there was a sense of co-ordination in the field that effected the development of literacy as a profession in itself.

Group Dynamics within Partnerships

A third approach to understanding partnership development is to look at the key dimensions of the group dynamics within the partnership process. Schulz, Israel and Lantz (2003) have developed an instrument for evaluating the dimensions of group dynamics within community-based participatory research partnerships. Although the use and application of this evaluation instrument is beyond the scope of the project, the guiding framework for the development of the tool will be used to shed some light on our findings. Figure 3 shows the characteristics of effective groups within the context of assessing coalitions and partnerships.

FIGURE 3 – CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING GROUP DYNAMICS AS AN ASPECT OF EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS



This figure is based on the idea that partnership objectives depend on the effectiveness of the group in using its individual and collective resources to reach its goals and to satisfy the needs of group members.

Environmental and Structural Characteristics

The group dynamics of these individual partnerships were shaped by both environmental and structural characteristics. At the environmental level, partnership effectiveness was enhanced when individual partner organizations came together with a common response to a local or regional workplace literacy problem. The more diversity in viewpoints from partner organizations as well as any previous past experiences in collaboration set a tone for the group dynamics.

“The dynamics were healthy, it was an open relationship, lots of open dialogue...”

BUSINESS EXPERT

Structural level characteristics such as the formalization of the partnership also shaped the dynamics. Many of the partnerships discussed in this case study established different types of agreements among members which ranged from the informal to the more formal type of contracts. What seems to have influenced the partnerships even more so was the common set of working principles that guided the project work. Finding the right mix of partners was also a key structural characteristic.

Group Dynamic Characteristics of Effective Partnerships

At the centre of the group dynamics of the partnership process was a shared leadership from all members which included equal workload tasks throughout the duration of the project work. When communication among all partners was open and there was a flow of information between the funding organization and the member organizations effectiveness was enhanced.

Another characteristic of the group dynamics was the co-operative development of project goals which aligned with a shared vision of what was possible. This helped set the stage for flexible participatory decision making processes. Consensus for important decisions, such as allocation of project funds, was often used. This type of dynamic allowed for a recognition of conflicts and various types of constructive problem solving.

Using a problem-solving process, established during the initial stage of the partnership, aided the sharing of power among mem-

bers. All of these dynamics resulted in the development of mutual trust—a key to effective partnership development. At the project operational level, meetings were well organized, with agendas that were developed in collaboration and shared facilitation. Partner members also shared in the tasks related to project evaluation.

Partnership Programs and Interventions

“They’ve been
the cushion on the
politics.”

BUSINESS EXPERT

As indicated in Figure 3 both the environmental characteristics and the group dynamics characteristics influenced the types of projects and interventions that were actually created. As presented in the findings section, projects were very innovative and cutting edge during the foundation building and development and demonstration years and less so during the period of program change.

Intermediate Measures of Partnership Effectiveness

For the most part, partner organizations perceived themselves as belonging to an effective group who achieved their goals in moving a workplace literacy and essential skills agenda forward. Partners also perceived personal, organizational and community benefits from participating in the partnership process. This perception was more evident in the foundation building and development and demonstration years. As well, there was a high degree of involvement in the project activities from all partner members. This contributed to a shared ownership and a commitment to implementing the project results. This cohesiveness was identifiable and added to members’ perceptions of effectiveness. In some instances, there was a sense of group and community empowerment when project goals were met. This led to future expectations that if another partnership could be developed, it would also have a similar positive impact.

Output Measures of Partnership Effectiveness

As presented in the findings, there were many accomplishments of Business and Labour Partnership Program. Achievements ranged

from the creation of new workplace models for business and labour groups to the recognition of literacy at the workplace as a national training priority. Partnership effectiveness was also felt when strides were made to develop provincial strategies and initiatives where none had existed earlier.

Through the Lens of Program Planning Models in Adult Education

Another way of making sense of the findings and applying them to one's own situation, is to view the NLS Business and Labour Partnership Program through the lens of programming models in adult education. Program planning models consist of ideas about how programs should be organized and what elements are necessary to ensure successful outcomes. Over the past few years many approaches to planning programs for adults have developed. Some models are linear and stepwise while others are non sequential using in-depth qualitative descriptions to depict a comprehensive array of issues and decision points. Three program planning models will be used here to understand different parts of the data. Boone's Conceptual Programming Model (2002) helps to explain some of the workings of the Business and Labour Partnership Program from a macro level analysis. Caffarella's Interactive Model of Program Planning (2002) helps us to see how certain steps were taken by stakeholders to actually form the partnership and a plan for a project. At the micro level, Cervero and Wilson's Negotiation Model of Program Planning (1998) provides some insights into the roles and behaviours of partner members.

A Conceptual Programming Model

Boone's conceptual programming model is designed to bring about planned intended changes of targeted systems based on the diagnosis of situational contexts. The model includes three interconnected and related sub-processes (1) planning (2) design and implementation and (3) evaluation and accountability. Each of

the sub-processes contains specific tasks that are approached from a process orientation rather than a mechanistic perspective as seen in Figure 4.

FIGURE 4 – BOONE’S CONCEPTUAL PROGRAMMING MODEL (ABRIDGED VERSION)

Planning	Design and Implementation		Evaluation and Accountability	
The Organization and its Renewal Process	Linking the Organization to its Publics	Designing the Planned Program	Implementing the Planned Program	Determining Program Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • functions of the organization • processes in the organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mapping of the publics • analysis of target publics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • translating marco needs into objectives • specifying learning strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • developing plans of action • monitoring the learning transaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • measuring outputs • using findings for organizational renewal

Planning

The planning sub-process includes two distinct but closely related dimensions: the organization and its renewal process and linking the organization to its publics. In this case, the organization is the National Literacy Secretariat. As described in the historical chronology, the NLS began its mandate in the late 80s to facilitate and effect changes in Canadian adult literacy. Its mission, philosophy and goals drove the planning process for the new Business and Labour Partnership Program. During its inception and the early foundation building years, the program was conceptually driven by a community and social development approach to change. This was accomplished through linkages with the target publics (business, labour, education), leader involvement, collaboration, needs

identification and analysis. The feedback obtained from the stakeholders and the lessons learned during these early years helped to further shape the program and facilitate a type of renewal process into the next period of development and demonstration.

A key process undertaken during these formation years of the program was the task of achieving effective linkages with each of its target publics and the various stakeholder groups. This was done by scanning and interpreting the external environment. Pilot projects provided knowledge about the social, cultural and political forces operating within this workplace environment. It also involved engaging the leaders of those publics in needs identification. These program planning steps around needs were undertaken during the foundation building years and helped to focus the next phase of the Program.

“There is no one right way to conduct an ONA (organizational needs assessment).”

Folinsbee, S., DeWitt, K., Rideout, E., Jensen, J. and Nutter, P. *A Guide for Planning and Conducting an Organizational Needs Assessment for Municipal Workplace Literacy programs.* Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators.

Design and Implementation

The second sub-process in Boone’s model is the design and implementation of the program. During the foundation building years, a blueprint for responding to the analyzed needs of the target publics emerged. Of particular interest during the design phase were the beliefs and strategies used to develop and further extend the program. Based on early successes, stakeholders from each target public helped to market the program impacts. This design and implementation sub-process has extended throughout the life of the program but was dependent on the amount of government funding at different periods of time.

Evaluation and Accountability

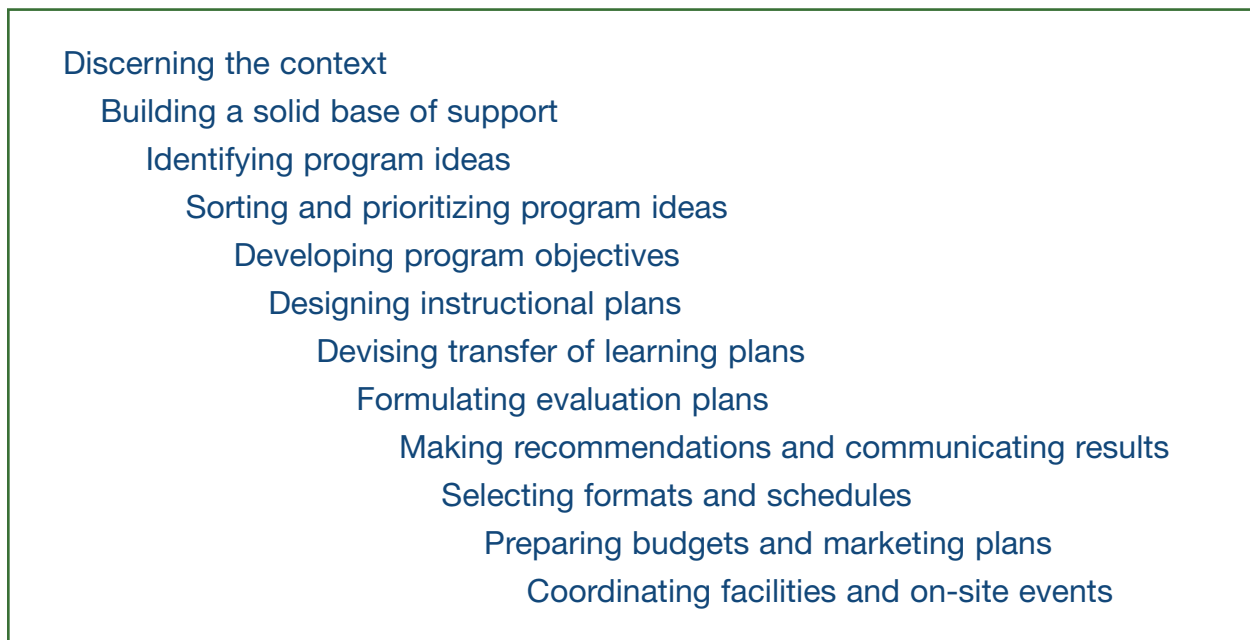
Two connecting dimensions of the third sub-process are evaluation and accountability. These emphasize the importance of obtaining hard evidence to verify the achievements in the program to significant stakeholders. In this case, those significant stakeholders were the federal government and Parliament. Regular mandated external evaluations helped to determine the effectiveness of the Business and Labour Partnership Program, and the costs incurred in producing the outcomes. As a result of the evaluations, the goals

and mechanisms of the program shifted in the development and demonstration years and even more so in the period of program change. During this period, an increased emphasis was placed on accountability. As defined in the program planning model, accountability refers to the process whereby the organization is held accountable for planned program outcomes and the effectiveness of their efforts in producing the intended outcomes. As a result of the focus on government accountability, there was much disconnect between the target publics and the NLS as an organization.

An Interactive Model of Program Planning

Caffarella’s interactive model of program planning provides some insights into the important steps needed to plan and implement a workplace literacy project. It also helps to focus on steps needed in early partnership formation. In this interpretation, the term project is used interchangeably with the term program. Caffarella presents a guide for practice through her stepwise model as seen in Figure 5.

FIGURE 5 – INTERACTIVE MODEL OF PROGRAM PLANNING



It takes into account the ever-changing nature of the planning process. It also acknowledges that people plan programs and that planning is not a neutral set of events.

“Often, people are working so hard to set up a program, keep it running, or achieve their learning goals, that they forget to celebrate their successes” (p. 31).

Evans, S., Twiss, D. and Wedel, R. *British Columbia Pulp and Paper Industry's Experience in Implementing a Worker Focused Learning Program in the Workplace: The LEAP Experience (Learning and Education Assisted by Peers)*. British Columbia Federation of Labour.

For the most part, the accomplishments and impacts of the NLS Business and Labour Partnership Program all started with individual organizations experiencing workplace change. At its earliest inception point, two or more stakeholders came together to discern the context. What happened at this step is that a representative from one organization became knowledgeable about another organization. Structural and cultural factors about each other's workplace were exchanged. For example, each stakeholder became aware of the mission of another organization, their information systems, how staff was trained and organizational decision making patterns.

On another level cultural factors were exchanged such as history and traditions, and the organizational beliefs and values. This flow of information was necessary before the partnership could begin. From their own perspectives, partners also became knowledgeable about the wider environment and its impact on the workplace and change. For example, important discussions took place around the current economic conditions, the national and provincial political agendas, and questions about whose needs would be served through a partnership. Sources of information were exchanged and a common set of beliefs about what needed to be done started to take place.

The next step focused on building a solid base of support. This support took the form of both commitment and action. Commitment to the idea of working together most often happened at this step. Action took place when people at different levels of each organization responded to that commitment. Small networks began to form and provided input into early project ideas. Further support for these ideas was often obtained from the wider community. Collaborations with other organizations and groups sometimes occurred.

Ethical issues such as privacy and confidentiality were considered by the organization representatives and how these issues might

Making Sense of the Findings

impact a project idea. At this point, the ideas were sorted and prioritized and there was equal decision sharing among the individual organizations. This was often the beginning of a partnership around a workplace literacy project. The next step was the development of project objectives which were written so that they could be understood by all partners involved. They were measurable in some form, and when changes were needed, negotiation was used in the planning process.

During the implementation stage of the project, action plans that had stemmed from the objectives were carried out and focused on the intended audience. Many of the other steps in Caffarella's model were often used over the life of the project. For example, project evaluation approaches that had been determined earlier were implemented and different formats were used to communicate project results or recommendations.

Negotiation Model of Program Planning

Cervero and Wilson (1998) believe that program planning in adult education is a social activity where people construct programs by negotiating interests in contexts marked by socially structured power relations. In their work, power is not viewed as a static resource in position but rather as a dynamic process in which agents and social structures interact. They also suggest that planners are operating on two levels as negotiators in the planning process. Substantial negotiations are around important features of the program while meta-negotiations are about the political relationships of who is included and excluded. There are three dimensions to their work: planning actions, power relations and relationship interests. When confronted with issues of power, planners use different behavioural patterns associated with negotiating organizational political processes. As the authors suggest, there are a number of ways that power is used to influence what happens in the planning process.

Drawing from the data there are both positive and negative influences of power as partnerships among the stakeholders

Making Sense of the Findings

developed. During the foundation building and development and demonstration years, power was used as a positive influence in shaping the felt needs of the partner organizations. Attention was given to ensure that all voices that needed to be heard were included in the initial formation of the partnership. Related to this was the importance of bringing alternative and divergent opinions to the planning table and having equal input into setting the agendas. Power was used as a positive influence in determining which local needs and which local populations were going to be served through the workplace project. Another example of positive influence was the manner in which partners set the norms for decisions that ensured a democratic process.

The period of program change saw a number of instances where the use of power had a negative influence on partnership development. For example, differences of opinion between the partners and the funder around project directions were suppressed or not heard. A political agenda which was at odds with stakeholder interests and a government ethos of accountability were also seen as negative influences of power on the development and sustainability of partnerships. Pressure was also felt by partner organizations to accept a new way of accessing NLS Business and Labour Partnership Program funds. These were often viewed as out of step with the needs of the partners.

On another dimension, individual member negotiation skills were evident in most of the partnerships that were developed. On a meta-negotiation level, considerable time was spent by all partners creating a planning committee to represent various stakeholder interests. Coupled with this was the negotiation that took place to develop an overall purpose and goals statement or mission for the joint project which reflected each partner organization. At the substantive negotiation level, partners negotiated around project action plans, budgets, and promotional strategies for the final deliverables.

SECTION 6

Implications for Workplace Literacy and Essential Skills

In this final section of the report, the implications of the case study are highlighted. It begins with a look at how practitioners at the field level could view the findings of the study. This is followed by a discussion of implications for policy analysts, and finally a look at how researchers could build on the case study results. Three authors who reflected on the findings from their respective viewpoints have written these individual sections. This design feature is intended to provide the project with additional authenticity.

Implications for Practice

Sylvia Sioufi, Canadian Union of Public Employees

In the absence of a Pan-Canadian literacy strategy and, consequently, of anything resembling a system for adult education, the NLS Business and Labour Partnership Program has been a “system enabler.” This case study shows that the NLS approach to partnership development has provided a much needed framework for the development and delivery of literacy programs in the workplace. This development has been comprehensive: it involves promotion and awareness, coordination and information sharing, professional development, research, and sharing of best practice models. Essentially, the Program has helped to consolidate the emerging field of workplace literacy.

Literacy practitioners will have a keen interest in the findings of this case study as it documents what the NLS approach ‘looked like.’ At the field level this study can be used to promote literacy practice within a broad, social development framework, to strengthen the

credibility of the literacy field, and to advocate for policies and programs that build on the partnership model pioneered by the NLS.

The NLS vision of literacy practice

The NLS created a space for a dynamic approach to learning—one that recognizes that the development of literacy skills can happen in varied, and equally valuable, ways. In this context, the workplace becomes a logical venue to explore, and employer and labour groups are invited to rise to the challenge and join others in the literacy field. They are encouraged to work in partnership and to experiment to develop innovative practices to provide learning opportunities in the workplace.

“I don’t know of any other government department...that’s done so much with so little...an amazing organization.”

LABOUR EXPERT

The strength of the NLS partnership model rests not only on the recognition that many groups can contribute to the creation of learning opportunities for adults but, more importantly, that these groups must be able to contribute, and contribute equally. This is evident in the level of support—beyond simply funding—provided by the NLS in the foundation building, as well as the development and demonstration periods of the Program. A comprehensive evaluation commissioned by the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) concludes that the NLS “was a significant influence on CUPE’s involvement in literacy” and that NLS staff “brought not only funding to the table but union sensitivity and a rich background with workplace literacy programs.” The evaluation also points to partnership work as the key strategy leading to the success of CUPE’s literacy program and credits the NLS with promoting and supporting this strategy. (Burke, 2006)

The NLS partnership model also recognizes that different partners have different motivations for a literacy program. Unions, employers, practitioners, and learners may all well agree that a literacy program would be beneficial, but the goals and expected outcomes may be quite different and even at odds. Rather than shy away from the politics of workplace literacy, the partnership model values the differences and creates venues to discuss them and ultimately come to the shared vision and common ground needed to build an effective partnership. The findings show that this approach

has led to successful partnerships and in turn fostered innovation in the field of workplace literacy practice.

“We did a lot of
visioning...problem
solving...risk taking.”

EDUCATION EXPERT

However, as the focus of the NLS starts to shift away from social development objectives, beginning in 2000, the ability to sustain the approach at the core of the partnership model is compromised. There is a disconnect between social development goals and an increased demand for measurable outcomes and results-based goals. The latter leaves little room for experimentation and risk taking—elements needed for continued development and innovation of literacy partnerships and practice. An example of the emerging concern with this trend is the increased focus on essential skills. A study sponsored by HRSDC, *Essential Skills and the Labour Movement: A Research Report*, shows that the main view from labour representatives is that the Essential Skills Framework is narrow and does not represent the broad view of literacy that labour uses in its approach. (Folinsbee, 2005)

Literacy instructors and workplace educators will need to hold on to the practices of an approach based on the broader, social development notion of literacy for life despite the policy and funding shifts away from this model. They are well placed to play a lead role in preserving and promoting this vision of literacy.

A credible field

Perhaps one of the lead contributions of the NLS as a system enabler has been the focus on literacy practitioner training and development. Unlike colleagues in other fields of education such as school teachers, college instructors and university professors, literacy practitioners did not generally enjoy recognition as professionals. Aside from lending credibility to workplace-based programs, practitioner training helps to position literacy learning as a legitimate education goal for adults. While there is still room for volunteers, such as peer tutors, they too take part in a training program.

The level of development of the workplace literacy field varies across the country. There is no doubt that provincial government support is a contributing reason—provinces such as Nova Scotia

and Quebec are good examples. However, the ability of practitioners to access professional development and training opportunities has also been a significant factor. When it comes to workplace-based programs, employers and labour look for an educational partner that has the broad based experience needed to develop a program to address their needs. The NLS Business and Labour Partnership Program recognized this early on and encouraged and funded initiatives to support the professional development of the field. For example, unions partnered with literacy instructors and labour educators to design peer tutor training programs. In addition, they produced curriculum development tools and workshops to share the ‘labour approach’ with literacy practitioners not yet familiar with the dynamics of workplace-based programs. This case study points to the need to recognize practitioner training and development as a key component of any literacy strategy. Building the credibility of the field will ensure that literacy can take its place as a legitimate component of Canada’s education system.

A platform for advocacy

There seems to be little disagreement that literacy is an important issue. The 2005 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (IALSS) pushed literacy out of the margins and forced governments, at all levels, to state that more must be done to address the literacy needs of Canadians. At the same time, two recent reports have called for a Pan-Canadian literacy strategy: the 2003 Report of the Standing Committee of Human Resources Development, *Raising Adult Literacy Skills: The Need for a Pan-Canadian Response*, and the 2005 Ministerial Advisory Committee on Literacy and Essential Skills Report, *Towards a Fully Literate Canada: Achieving National Goals through a Comprehensive Pan-Canadian Literacy Strategy*.

Yet the adult literacy sector still finds itself having to make the case for literacy. There is little or no core funding for community or workplace-based literacy. The sector is dependent on project funding, and even that funding has been cut back and its scope severely restricted by the current federal government. The federal cuts have led to a broad based campaign in support of literacy

programs. Practitioners can use the findings of this case study to point to a concrete example of what works and call for specific policies and programs that build on the approach pioneered by the NLS Business and Labour Partnership Program.

Implications for Policy

James E. Page, former Executive Director, National Literacy Secretariat

When the NLS Business and Labour Partnership Program began in 1990 federal literacy policy was based on the premise that increasing the quality of the literacy skills of the Canadian population would have a beneficial effect on the nation's social, economic, cultural and citizenship development. This policy proposition is still well grounded in research today. For example, evidence suggests that literacy provides access to opportunities to learn, to find better employment (Boothby, 2002) and to earn higher financial rewards (Osberg, 2000; Green and Riddell, 2001). In addition, literacy also affects a person's social status, level of citizenship and community participation, linguistic vitality, cultural involvement, access to health care and social services, and more (OECD and Statistics Canada, 1997).

The Program was also based on the understanding that the Canadian literacy policy field is intricate given our constitutional division of powers. The provinces and territories play a role given their mandate for education and training, while the municipalities are engaged through their support for community resources such as libraries and schools and delivery of social services that have a literacy component to them. The federal government's economic and social development mandate means that it, too, has policy interests. Since literacy policy is made at every level of government, the Program was developed not only as partnership involving business and labour but also as one involving various levels of government.

Lesson 1: The strategic importance of multi-sector partnerships

This case study points to the strategic importance of multi-sector partnerships, for example with business, non-governmental organizations and labour unions, in the design and implementation of government policy. Simply stated, governments seldom if ever act alone. This is especially so in pluralistic democracies in which governments depend on all sectors to contribute to healthy communities and prosperous economies.

Macro-economic concerns such as productivity, wealth creation, international competitiveness, and the economic security of Canadians traditionally dominate the federal agenda. Research shows that the more literate a society becomes the higher is its productivity and standard of living (Coulombe and Tremblay, 2004). Studies confirm that enhancing literacy skills leads to increased labour market participation and stronger national capacity to compete in the global economy (OECD-Statistics Canada, 1997; Shalla and Schellenberg, 1998). Literacy has become a prerequisite for the acquisition of the new and emerging workplace skills that people need for employment and prosperity in knowledge-based economies. This case study demonstrates how these federal policy objectives have been translated into program design and multi-sector partnerships.

Federal involvement in the Program was based on a commitment to enhancing literacy as a way of improving economic performance and employability. Capacity building, skills development in the workplace and commitment to the creation of new knowledge from the shop floor, were the multi-sector partnership tactics used to achieve the federal policy objectives. These strategic tactics helped to enhance literacy and essential skills in order to increase productivity, competitiveness, wealth generation, and economic security.

Lesson 2: Government must make its “big picture” policy objectives known

“The IALS (International Adult Literacy Survey) defines literacy in terms of a mode of adult behavior...”

Bloom, M. and Lafleur, B. (1999). *Turning Skills into Profit: Economic Benefits of Workplace Education Programs*. The Conference Board Inc.

The case study also reveals that to realize program objectives the government must explain its “big picture” policy interests. Part of the success of the foundation building and development and demonstration years of the Program lies in the fact that the government took time both to research the implications of literacy for the economy through, for example, its support for the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and the more recent Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ALLSS), and that the government also invested in the dissemination of those results to the partners and stakeholders to increase knowledge and spur further developments. The evidence presented here suggests that an appreciation of the “bigger picture,” and infusions of new knowledge helped the Program to bring often-opposing interests together. By providing a broad environmental scan of literacy, the federal government encouraged joint action to realize its strategic policy objectives.

Lesson 3: The importance of policy steadfastness

The case study also demonstrates the importance of policy steadfastness in long-term and slowly evolving fields like literacy and essential skills. This means that once policies are established they must be systematically adhered to in order to succeed. The evidence suggests that this objective was accomplished in the initial periods of the Program by a skilful, long-range focus on multi-sectoral partnerships and by a commitment to involve employers, employees, governments, and literacy providers. The foundation building period of the Program used the workplace “as an innovative venue for advancing literacy”. The development of a cadre of trained workplace instructors gave credibility to workplace literacy as a legitimate adult learning enterprise. During the period of development and demonstration, the commitment to collaborative multi-party partnerships and the workplace venue remained unshaken. For example, government-sponsored policy conversations were held that provided national forums for key

stakeholders resulting in increased intersectoral and multi-sectoral investments in the government's strategic objectives for literacy.

Consistency of effort resulted in the continued growth of respect and trust between and amongst labour, business, educators as well as the provinces and territories being accorded due recognition for the contributions they were making. Over time, this steadfastness built a willing coalition of partners committed to working in concert to advance the clearly stated literacy policy agenda of the government. The importance of policy steadfastness became evident when, in the period of program change, there was a shift to a top-down accountability ethic that altered the dynamics of the Program leading to a loss of commitment and a decline in trust. The evidence suggests that the policy objective of achieving literacy gains in the workforce and the workplace became secondary to the management preoccupation with accountability. The policy lesson is that in spite of the importance of strong and appropriate financial probity (the means) government can only succeed if it retains a commitment to the bigger policy picture (the ends).

Implications for Research

Swée Goh, University of Ottawa, School of Management

Findings from this study have provided a rich descriptive perspective of the partnership process. It has also yielded some insights of the factors that could affect the success of partnerships in this area and also some of the potential problems that could arise and mitigate this success. These findings can provide researchers with a foundation for further ideas in understanding the partnership process. As researchers are interested in generalizability of results, one such implication would be in studying how the partnership process unfolds. Is there a broad conceptual or theoretical framework that can fit this process? How can the findings from this study provide some preliminary insights of how the partnership process occurs in a different context such as in small to medium size enterprises in the private sector? Results from this type of

investigation can then add to our knowledge of how to manage the partnership process more successfully.

Some Research Questions from the Findings

“Education institutions are developing closer connections with industry to find ways of best meeting their needs” (p. 6).

Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board. (2001). *Growing our own workforce*. Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board.

The findings from the data that was gathered in this case study show that successful partnerships move through a number of phases over time. At each phase, some factors are clearly important to move this process into fruition. Some of these include the importance of developing a shared vision and having common goals. The findings also found that some common ground rules and having mutual trust and respect are also important to making the partnership successful. Having a balance of power between the partners and transparency in the relationship were also important success factors. Some dynamics were also important such as clear leadership from the funders and partners being comfortable in taking some risks. Just as important was the need for openness and trust in negotiating any issues and developing ownership of the projects and accountability.

Key stakeholders were also interviewed in this study for their views about partnerships that did not work. Some concerns such as conflicting objectives and hidden agendas were seen as factors that could lead to an unsuccessful partnership. Other factors raised included the lack of agreement about basic working principles and a change in direction of the partnership goals without consensus can lead to broken trust and feelings that there is a lack of honesty and can precipitate power struggles for control. Two other factors that could lead to an unsuccessful partnership are the loss of key champions and uncertainty about funding. Lastly, unclear information flows among partners can also be detrimental to the partnership relationship.

These findings raise some interesting research questions. For example, how important is trust and honesty in the process compared to other factors such as balance of power, building consensus on goals and visioning of the partnership? Are they interrelated to some extent or is there a sequence? Is the development of an acceptable and effective information sharing system and expectations of how and what information is to be

available to all partners at the start contribute significantly to building openness and trust? Another important implication for research is the question of common goals and shared vision of the partnership. How significant is this to successful partnerships in general? Is this an important antecedent to developing greater connectedness between the partners and will this also prevent power struggles for control when problems arise during the partnership? If there is proper investment of time and effort to building goal consensus and commitment to them, will it result in less likelihood for deviant behaviours by one party and less conflict about changes to them?

The research questions raised by the findings of this study are important as they address the relationships among these factors identified as important in affecting the success, or potential failure, of such partnerships. Secondly, the findings have an overlay of an unfolding process. That is, partnerships evolve over time with unique consequences, actions, and outcomes that could affect the overall success of the outcome. But how are these two research issues or questions related?

A Life-cycle Perspective of Partnerships

“When you’re starting out, you need to cherry pick the partners.”

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One fruitful conceptual approach to linking the factors to an unfolding process is to take a life-cycle perspective. Previous research and conceptual thinking in the organizational life-cycle management literature can be a useful way to frame the discussion on research implications from the findings of this study (Liao, 2006; Geroski, 2000; Dodge, Fullerton and Robbins, 1994; Hanks and Watson, 1993; Quinn and Cameron, 1983). For example, the notion that organizations move through a process of growth and change over time is useful to frame the unfolding process of the partnership process as it moves from initial funding to project goals to implementation to final outcomes as described in this study (Jawahar and McLaughlin, 2001; Van De Ven and Poole, 1995).

More importantly, the life-cycle perspective also builds in that each phase has its own crisis potential and needed resolution in order for the growth or change to continue (Lester, Parnell and Carraher,

“There must be strong management commitment to make literacy program work” (p. 55).

Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. *Business Results through Literacy*. Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, Ontario Division.

2003; Drazin and Kazanjian; 1990; Miller and Freisen, 1984; Churchill and Lewis, 1983; Kimberly and Miles, 1980; Adices, 1979; Greiner, 1972). This fits into relating the factors identified in this study as potentially contributing to the success of a partnership or threatening its survival. The life-cycle perspective of the partnership process can therefore capture both the unfolding of the partnership in phases and also the key factors that could critically impinge on the further progress of the partnership in each phase such as trust, information sharing, goal consensus, power struggles and conflict. In this way the life-cycle perspective can address the question of not only of what factors are important in what phases but begin to build theory around explaining why they are important to each phase of the partnership process which is the relatedness issues raised earlier.

This study as discussed has useful and significant implications for research not only in the area of business labour partnerships in building workplace literacy but also in furthering our understanding of the partnership process in general. The life-cycle perspective that has been drawn from the findings of this study, for example, will allow for further more focused research in this area.

SECTION 7

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Appendix A Annotated Bibliography

Focused Literature Review on Partnership Development

Asthana, S., Richardson, S. and Halliday, J. (2002). Partnership working in public policy provision: A framework for evaluation. *Social Policy & Administration*, 36(7), 780–795.

Because the theoretical benefits of public policy partnerships have been widely accepted, but have not been explained in practical, real-world terms, the authors discuss the development and implementation of strategies for establishing, strengthening, and sustaining local partnerships. A conceptual framework for the evaluation of partnership working is presented in relation to Heath Action Zones (HAZ) in the United Kingdom. A primary purpose of this framework is to heighten stakeholders' awareness and recognition concerning the broad range of issues that are associated with partnership working. Another main purpose is to outline a framework that may serve as a tool for facilitating clear thinking.

Baker, E.L., Jr. and Koplan, J.P. (2002). Strengthening the nation's public health infrastructure: Historic challenge, unprecedented opportunity. *Health Affairs*, 21(6), 15–27.

A review of the 1990s American public health infrastructure was conducted to discuss its progress and identify future challenges and opportunities in relation to recent terrorist activities. The authors focus on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the related national leadership roles, such as in partnership with national organizations, and supporting research-methods development on the public health system. More specifically, the CDC's Health Alert Network initiative has four major focus areas that include linking community partners, and developing knowledge management systems. They determined that

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new partnerships must be developed to increase collaboration at the national and state levels.

Crowther, J.L. and Trott, B. (2004). *Partnering with purpose: A guide to strategic partnership development for libraries and other organizations*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

Partnership development is examined from an historical perspective, taking into account agreements, expectations, and opportunities. The discussion then focuses on seven motivating factors for governments to form strategic partnerships, such as accessing specialized knowledge of potential partners, and developing political mandates to collaborate with other organizations. Further, four significant steps related to establishing an internal foundation within a library are outlined. The purpose of this foundation is to provide purpose, direction, coherence, and evaluation. The authors stress that their book does not adopt an academic or research-based approach to partnership development.

Davies, J.S. (2004). Conjunction or disjunction? An institutionalist analysis of local regeneration partnerships in the UK. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 28(3), 570–585.

Institutional theory is implemented to examine the development of urban regeneration partnerships within four, English urban areas. This research focuses on four salient issues that include determining the extent of partnerships following a path-dependent course, and examining the dominant patterns of institutional constraint in partnerships. The broader issue of government support for partnerships and the potential collapse of partnerships is also addressed. A notable finding suggests that partnerships are not path-dependent, but they are path-shaping arenas where different values and governing mechanisms compete.

Donaldson, J. and Kozoll, C. (1999). *Collaborative program planning: Principles, practices and strategies*. Malabar, FL: Kreiger.

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The authors begin by addressing five significant aspects of collaboration and related theoretical foundations. The remaining chapters examine practitioner collaborations within several adult educational contexts. These chapters focus on subjects including theory and practice relationships, collaboration changes, difficulties, and mediation, and collaboration assessment and dynamics. Those who are associated with not-for-profit organizations and conduct research, or develop programs, or teach within adult education are viewed as the main audience for this collaboration program planning book.

Highum, A.C. and Lund, J.P. (2000). Partnerships in programming: Relationships that make a difference. *New Directions for Student Services*, 90, 35–44.

The chapter focuses on the benefits and strengths of programming partnerships between student affairs staff and several American, tertiary educational institutions, and also stresses the positive effects on students. Partnerships are examined using four categories, such as those with academic affairs offices and faculty, and those with constituencies off campus. Findings include the themes that relationship building is key to successful initiatives, programming partnerships require resources, energy, and commitment, and what is most needed, but frequently forgotten, is patience and a sustainable vision for the programming product.

Huang, C.Y. and Wu, Y.W. (2003). Decision model for partnership development in virtual enterprises. *International Journal of Production Research*, 41(9), 1855–1872.

This partnership development model employs a micro view, or a view from a company's perspective. A company can use this four-factor model to specify its partnership strategy and also gauge the future of this strategy in relation to another company. The four factors comprise the format and number of relationships with suppliers, and the types and methods of services provided by suppliers. Partnership change using six

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factors, such as environment, and organizational learning processes and coordination is also examined.

Maddock, S. (2000). Managing the development of partnerships in health action zones. *International Journal of Health Care Quality Assurance*, 13(2), 65–73.

Health Action Zones (HAZ) became one of the seminal partnership initiatives introduced throughout the United Kingdom. Based on first-hand experiences of those within HAZ, Maddock found that these partnerships promoted innovation, but were hindered because national frameworks focused on monitoring and measuring short-term successes rather than on development. Partnership development was also hindered due to internal blame cultures, poor adaptability of management, and disconnects in thinking among policy makers.

McCullum, P. (2000). Six points of a partnership. *Journal of Staff Development*, 21(2), 39.

Based on his partnership research between universities and professional associations, McCullum describes six critical principles that characterize successful partnerships. These principles include mutual goals and benefits, trusting and nurturing relationships, open communications, effective leadership, and shared decision making. Open communication is viewed as a highly significant principle because it is a necessary link to developing trust among partners.

Mudambi, R. and Schründer, C.P. (1996). Progress towards buyer-supplier partnerships. *European Journal of Purchasing & Supply Management*, 2(2/3), 119–127.

A mail survey of more than 600 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) throughout England was conducted to examine specific quantitative measures of their respective buyer-supplier partnership development. When compared to the vast amount of research pertaining to large enterprises, there are very few SME studies, and only the present one

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focuses on partnerships and SME buyers. The results suggest that there is a fairly low level of partnership development, and firm size and degree of partnership formality lead to differing effects on partnership indicators.

Mullinix, B.B. (2001). Nurturing partnership: A Southern African continuum of flexible stages in partnership development. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 3(2), 1–12.

This discussion focuses on discovering how a clearer understanding of the partnership development process can help to support and nurture Southern African partnerships. Specifically, it emphasizes the relationship between international and local NGOs, as well as the importance of partnership development as a tool for promoting meaningful development, education policy, and understanding on local, national and international levels. Partnership development is viewed as a powerful tool with great potential, and related strategies are proliferating among international, bilateral, and multilateral agencies.

Saltiel, I.M. (1998). Defining collaborative partnerships. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 79, 5–11.

This chapter provides a short literature review on collaborative learning partnership definitions. The author describes the essence of partnered learning in terms of a goal that may not have been achieved without the partnership, and the notion that partners select each other. Many related definitions and views are cited, such as Wildavsky (1986), who differentiates between cooperation and collaboration, Baldwin and Austin (1995), who discuss collaboration among fellow faculty members, and Kerka (1997), who defines collaboration in terms of individual and organizational levels.

Schulz, A.J., Israel, B.A. and Lantz, P. (2003). Instrument for evaluating dimensions of group dynamics within community-based participatory research partnerships. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 26, 249–262.

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Because of the paucity of instruments to evaluate partnerships, the authors developed an evaluation instrument to assess salient dimensions of group dynamics in community-based participatory research partnerships. The conceptual framework for this instrument is derived from literature reviews of effective groups, and coalition and partnership models. The evaluation instrument is applied and presented using three case studies that serve to provide insights into self-assessment and partnership development. Lessons learned, future challenges, and potential directions for evaluation tools are also discussed.

Scott, J.E. and Gable, G. (1997). Goal congruence, trust, and organizational culture: Strengthening knowledge links. *Proceedings of the Eighteenth International Conference on Information Systems* (pp. 107–120). Atlanta: Association for Information Systems.

Strengthening knowledge links is presented as a theoretical framework using five phases of partnership development and three challenges faced by knowledge link partnerships. The five phases comprise establishing the purpose, finding a partner, and then defining, maintaining, and institutionalizing the partnership. Goal congruence, trust, and organizational culture are also salient factors. The challenges include fitting the partner's vision and goals, trust, and institutionalization of a partnership-specific culture. Implications for management, universities, and research are also discussed.

Smith, A., Conveney, J., Carter, P., Jolley, G. and Laris, P. (2004). The eat well SA project: An evaluation-based case study in building capacity for promoting healthy eating. *Health Promotion International*, 19(3), 327-334.

The Eat Well SA (South Australia) project has formed very substantial and effective partnerships and relationships with 50 organizations. The main purposes of this article are to describe the project evaluation outcomes, to further examine evaluation results using a model of capacity building, and to outline a planning and evaluation model for building

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capacity for healthy eating at a local or regional level. Partnership development was found to be a significant strategy for success, leading to increased problem-solving capacity among important stakeholders and workers from education, childcare, health, transport, and food industry sectors.

Sparks, D. (2000). Partnerships need purposes. *Journal of Staff Development, 21*(2), 3.

Sparks emphasizes that the strength of educational partnerships depends on a broad and compelling purpose that serves to lead and motivate partners' work. Partnerships are most useful when they are inspired by challenging goals that require interdependency and synergy to be completed. New partnerships often fail because of partners' unwillingness to accept major changes in their respective beliefs and practices. Partners must be willing to assume new relationships, responsibilities, and roles in order to maintain effective partnerships.

Focused Literature Review on Program Planning Theory

Boone, E., Safrit, R. and Jones, J. (2002). *Developing programs in adult education: A conceptual programming model* (2nd. ed.). Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

This “systems approach” model comprises the three main sub-processes of planning, design and implementation, and evaluation and accountability. Planning involves five tasks related to understanding, developing, and renewing an organization. Design and implementation consist of four tasks that function to connect an organization to those it serves. Evaluation and accountability use evaluation findings to renew the organization. Adult education providers are the target of this model, but it may also be appropriate for developing and promoting any organization.

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Boyle, P.G. (1981). *Planning better programs*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Boyle examines programming using a thorough synthesis of theory, analysis, and practice. Programming is connected to continuing education/lifelong learning, and is described by fifteen key concepts. Nine of the concepts relate to planning, the next four are associated with design and implementation, and the final two concepts involve evaluation. He outlines six key assumptions that relate to the role of planned change and the development of a continuing education program, for example, the most desirable change is predetermined and democratically achieved, and continuing education programs can contribute to the social and economic progress of communities.

Brookfield, S. (1986). *Understanding and facilitating adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

With respect to programming, Brookfield stresses the importance of planners (adult educators) to employ their cognitive maps, experiences, and intuition when forming decisions about specific programs. He focuses on needs assessment, determining objectives and content, and evaluation. Recipients of adult education programs must be encouraged to participate fully in programming because this will reinforce their commitment to the program and they will benefit from the focus on real-life concerns and meaningfulness. Recognizing that context is crucial when programming is one of four main themes discussed throughout this text.

Caffaraella, R. (2002). *Planning programs for adult learners*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

This program planning model is derived from a variety of related models, but she claims that it differs in two main respects; her model includes and modifies classical and current descriptions of the program planning process, and it also is a multi-component model that has no fixed starting or

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ending points in the planning process. Further, one can choose some or all of these components as appropriate, such as identifying program needs or designing instructional plans. This model is essentially a guide for adult education programmers who work in diverse environments.

Cervero, R. and Wilson, A.L. (1998). *Planning responsibly for adult education: A guide to negotiating power and interests*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Planning is viewed as a social activity where aspects such as the purposes, content, audience, and format of a program are negotiated. Negotiations concern power, and people with a variety of interests who work in diverse institutional contexts. The authors stress that adult educators must be competent negotiators, aware of political diversity, able to create and sustain effective, democratic planning processes, and possess a good understanding of their respective institutions and related social aspects.

Field, L. (1990). *Skilling Australia*. Sydney: Longman Cheshire.

This model is derived from industrial training and includes groups, such as car mechanics, draftspeople, and telecommunications technicians. Its purpose is to encourage workers to perform more skillfully and create a more efficient and productive work environment. The seven stages of this model include investigating skills and training issues, analysing job competencies, stating performance objectives, structuring a training program, delivering the training, supervising practice, and assessing skills.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Seabury.

Freire's inductive model differs greatly from those cited herein because it is based on values gleaned from oppressed peasants in Brazil. He advocates for a "problem-posing pedagogy", where learners question, analyse, and act, resulting in their liberation. Evaluation of information is viewed as a continuous process. In terms of community

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development, related themes could include, “How can we obtain fire protection?”, or with older adults, “How can we stay independent as long as possible?”

Houle, C.O. (1996). *The design of education* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Houle expands upon Tyler’s model and modifies it specifically for adult education. Such adult education settings are influenced by the power of program administrators and those enrolled in the programs, rather than by the program subject or methods employed. Adult learners may come from factories, communities, as well as conventional education institutions. This planning framework consists of seven components, such as making a decision to proceed, designing a suitable format, and putting a plan into effect.

Kidd, R. (1973). *How adults learn*. New York: Association Press.

This programming model is learner centred and analytic in terms of curriculum development, making it unlike those described herein. Curriculum development is based on Tyler (1949), who employs “screens” to determine educational and learning objectives. Several programming stages are examined, such as identifying learners’ needs, engaging the learner, and the final stage that poses the important question, “How much change and growth has there been?” A standard quantitative methodology is implemented in the process of answering this salient question.

Knowles, M.S. (1970). *The modern practice of adult education: Pedagogy vs. andragogy*. New York: Association Press.

Knowles’ programming model derives from his own andragogical philosophy that assumes adults proceed toward self-direction and use their experience and self-evaluation. A needs diagnosis is carried out, for example, using interviews and surveys at individual, organizational, and community levels. The potential objectives that result are separated into educational and operational categories,

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and then screened using the three “filters” of institutional philosophy, feasibility, and individual interest. The needs that remain are the program objectives. The next step is comprehensive program operation, or managing what has been planned. Evaluation is addressed in terms of behavioural change and self-development.

Nadler, L. and Nadler, Z. (1994). *Designing training programs: The critical events model*. (2nd ed.). Houston: Gulf.

The critical events model comprises eight events that are connected by evaluation and feedback. The process must begin by identifying organizational needs. Events that follow include specifying job performance, determining objectives, and selecting instructional strategies. This model emphasizes that those being trained should not be viewed as mere production instruments, but as people who may want to learn skills that are not necessarily related to their current job description.

Sork, T.J. (2000). Planning educational programs. In A.L. Wilson and E. Hayes (Eds.), *Handbook of adult and continuing education* (pp. 180-186). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Educational program planning is viewed as a situation-specific task, requiring a specialized approach in each case. Six program planning elements, similar to those from the technical-rational tradition, are outlined, such as analysing context and learner community, and preparing instructional and administrative plans. The six elements interact with the technical, social-political, and ethical domains of planning. The technical domain involves “how to” planning questions, the social-political domain involves “human dynamics” questions related to interests, power relationships, and meaning, and the ethical domain involves “how to act” questions in the context of learners, workers, and the organization’s mission statement.

Yang, B. (1999). How effectively do you use power and influence? In M. Silberman (Ed.), *The 1999 training and performance sourcebook* (pp. 143-155). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Yang's self-assessment instrument enables planners to gauge power and influence tactics they use within a variety of planning contexts. These tactics were developed in conjunction with adult education practitioners and comprise reasoning, consulting, appealing, networking, bargaining, pressuring, and counteracting. They are intended to assist practitioners in their particular planning situations.

Appendix B

Interview Schedule for Business, Labour and Education Participants

1. Please begin by providing a short description of the organization that you currently work (or have worked) in and its relation to literacy?
2. How do you define the word partnership?
3. Please describe your relationship with the NLS Business/Labour Partnership Program.
4. What are the key factors that you believe make (made) the partnership successful?
5. How is workplace-related adult literacy different from other adult literacy programming?
6. Can you think of any specific projects, activities and events that helped to develop the NLS Business/Labour Partnership Program?
7. Can you think of any specific projects that have and had an impact on your practice?
8. How does one count those activities or projects that don't actually access NLS funds?
9. Have you ever had a project proposal rejected by the NLS?
10. How would you describe the dynamics of the partnership?
11. Can you think of an incident/experience/story in the partnership that was particularly telling and that you remember clearly?
12. What are the key factors that you believe break a partnership?
13. What are the current issues in partnership development in workplace literacy and essential skills training?
14. Have you seen any changes in the way NLS Business/Labour partnerships have been developed over the years?
15. What's the most important lesson you have learned from working with the NLS Business/Labour Partnership Program?

Appendix C

Interview Schedule for Government Participants

1. Please begin by providing a short description of the government department that you currently work (or have worked) in and its relation to literacy?
2. How do you define the word partnership?
3. Please describe your relationship with the NLS Business/Labour Partnership Program.
4. What are the key factors that you believe have made this government partnership program a success?
5. What projects, activities or events do (did) you engage in that helped to develop the partnership program?
6. Describe any strategies that you use(d) to engage business/labour/practitioners in the partnership program.
7. How does one count those partnership activities that didn't access NLS funds?
8. Can you think of an incident/experience/story in the partnership that was particularly telling and that you remember clearly?
9. In your opinion, what are the actual accomplishments of the NLS Business/Labour Partnership Program?
10. What are the key factors that you believe break a partnership?
11. How would you describe the decision making process in the partnership?
12. How would you define a funding relationship in a partnership?
13. What are the current issues in partnership development in workplace literacy and essential skills training?
14. What's the most important lesson you have learned from working with the NLS Business/Labour Partnership Program?

**Appendix D
Key Informants**

Michael Bloom
The Conference Board of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario

Joe Brown
Nova Scotia Department of Education
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Jean Connon Unda
Toronto, Ontario

Margan Dawson
Association of Workplace Educators of Nova
Scotia (AWENS)
Hammonds Plain, Nova Scotia

Robert Despina
Standard Aero Ltd.
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Christine Featherstone
ABC Canada Literacy Foundation
Toronto, Ontario

Sue Folinsbee
Toronto, Ontario

Lynda Fownes
British Columbia Construction Industry Skills
Improvement Council
Burnaby, British Columbia

Herman Hansen
Boeing Canada Technology
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Pat Hodgson
Capilano College
North Vancouver, British Columbia

Sandi Howell
Workplace Education Manitoba Steering
Committee (WEMSC)
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Tamara Levine
Canadian Labour Congress
Ottawa, Ontario

Barbara Macnutt
Prince Edward Island Department of Education
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

Greg Maruca
Alberta Union of Provincial Employees
Edmonton, Alberta

Conrad Murphy
Bow Valley College
Calgary, Alberta

Bryan Neath
United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW)
Toronto, Ontario

Patricia Nutter
Canadian Association of Municipal Administrators
Perth, Ontario

James E. Page
Ottawa, Ontario

Blair Penny
Prince Edward Island Federation of Labour
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

Carl Pursey
Prince Edward Island Federation of Labour
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island

Linda Shoheit
The Centre for Literacy
Montreal, Quebec

Sylvia Sioufi
Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)
National
Ottawa, Ontario

Ron Torgerson
Saskatchewan Federation of Labour
Regina, Saskatchewan

Sue Turner
BCHydro
Burnaby, British Columbia

Linda Wentzel
Nova Scotia Federation of Labour
Lunenburg, Nova Scotia

Ed Wong
Business Council of British Columbia
Vancouver, British Columbia

Appendix E Case Study of the NLS Business and Labour Partnership Program Consent to Participate

I agree to participate in this project in a taped interview. I understand that notes may be taken and that three types of reports or papers will be prepared.

I understand that as a participant in this study I have the following rights:

- My participation is entirely voluntary.
- I can ask that any part of what I said be excluded from the project data.
- I am free to withdraw from the research at any time. I understand that if I choose to withdraw, my words will not be included in any of the reports.

I am participating in an interview under the following conditions:

- I wish to be acknowledged in the list of interviewees or participants, and if so, in this way (example: full name, first name only, made up name):

Organizational affiliation (if you choose):

- If my words are quoted, or included in reports and papers, I wish to be acknowledged in this way (example: first name only, full name, made up name):

Role and/or organizational affiliation:

- If my words are selected for use, I want to be contacted to review them before they are included in the final reports prepared by the writing team.
 Yes No
- I would like to receive an electronic copy of the final national report when it is completed.
 Yes No

Signature: _____

Complete Mailing Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Date: _____

Appendix F
Data Coding and Reduction Form

Stakeholder _____

Case number _____

Definitions of Partnership by Stakeholder
QS.2 (G) (BLE)

Factors of a Successful Partnership with the NLS
QS. 3, 4 (G) (BLE)

Projects, Activities, Events, Strategies,
Accomplishments in NLS Partnership
QS, 5, 6, 9 (G) QS. 6 (BLE)

Specific Projects and Activities and Impact on Practice
QS. 7 (G) QS. 7, 8 (BLE)

Rejected Proposal Experience
QS. 9 (BLE)

Dynamics of NLS Partnership
QS. 11, 12 (G) QS. 10 (BLE)

Factors of an Unsuccessful Partnership with NLS
QS. 3, 10 (G) QS. 3, 12 (BLE)

Issues, Changes, Lessons in NLS Partnership
QS. 8, 13, 14 (G) QS. 5, 11, 13, 14, 15 (BLE)

Appendix G List of Documents by Province

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