

Building Sustainable Futures: Essential Skills for Employment Project

NEWS AND VIEWS UPDATE – MARCH 2016

Building a national learning community for Canada's economic and social prosperity

Background: YWCA Toronto launched a new national initiative, Building Sustainable Futures: Essential Skills for Employment (ESE) project, in March 2014. This initiative is designed to share the promising practices and lessons learned of YMCA/YWCA organizations delivering Essential Skills programming. This unique project focuses on the essential employment skills necessary to prepare for, engage and thrive in today's knowledge-based economy. The ESE project aims to strengthen the capacity of Canada's essential skills training organizations and ultimately improve the economic stability of unemployed or underemployed individuals. The project focuses on helping youth, immigrants, mature workers and Indigenous people become more resilient and reach their potential. The project is funded by the Government of Canada's Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program (ALLESPP).

Building a National Learning Collaborative: Sharing the Stories

YWCA Toronto knows that each participant has unique needs and that individuals may have to overcome multiple barriers such as poverty, violence, health, including mental health, issues, child support, social isolation, depression, legal issues, low-self-esteem, , disabilities, low literacy and essential skills, a lack of technical skills, and professional and academic qualifications and accreditation. The YWCA takes a holistic approach, meeting each person's needs and referring the individuals involved in the ESE program to relevant programs available at YWCA Toronto and/or in the community to help them overcome or manage these issues.



Through a request for proposal process, YWCA Toronto established a diverse YMCA/YWCA learning collaborative that is piloting and documenting the impact of their programs on the communities with whom they work. The project's pilots have already demonstrated impact in the nine collaborator communities across Canada: YWCA Halifax (NS), YWCA Hamilton (ON), YWCA Agvvik (Iqaluit, NU), YMCA/YWCA National Capital Region (ON), YWCA St. John/Moncton (NB), YWCA Saskatoon (SK), YWCA Thompson (MB), YWCA Toronto (ON), and YWCA Vancouver (BC). One YWCA Vancouver client describes the impact like this: "I think all aspects of the program have been life-changing, from understanding the hidden job market to building confidence." On the Atlantic side, YWCA St. John/Moncton shares the determination of the women they work with: "We have keen women; some looking at self-employment, others employment and furthering education. They are willing to work hard to overcome barriers and challenges to get to work." We look forward to sharing more testimonials and evidence-based data on the impact and outcomes of the work being done across the country as we strengthen this national learning community.

The Skills Development Centre: A YWCA Toronto Initiative

The ESE project falls under the umbrella of the Skills Development Centre (SDC), a YWCA Toronto initiative that embeds social innovation into community economic development. The SDC has become the heart of a vibrant national learning community where leadership development, partnerships, collaborations and social engagements are nurtured and advanced. For years, YWCA Toronto through SDC has been designing and implementing essential skills training. The program models have proven to be successful, with thousands of women's lives being transitioned into economic prosperity. These models are based on customized, needs-based interventions that assist individuals in building a foundation of essential skills. We are committed to building sustainable futures for individuals, communities and organizations.

Promising and Emerging Practices of ESE Programs

YWCA Toronto and the ESE learning community continues to innovate, create and build strength-based program models based on promising practices that we will document and share with communities and organizations across Canada. We are excited to be working together to learn from a range of models working with the four priority groups. Through knowledge building and dissemination, we aim to build a skilled and resilient workforce that can make Canada competitive and inclusive, so all job seekers can seek possibilities!

The SDC has adapted a strength-based approach to asset development in its program framework and in documenting impact at an individual level as well. It is based on five dimensions:

- Personal Development and Career Management Services
- Essential Skills and Employability Skills Training
- Job Readiness and Placement Services
- Professional Development Services and Training Resources
- Leadership and Business Services

Today this approach is being branded as the Building Sustainable Futures (BSF) model and we are documenting the evidence-based data so to expand the reach.

Join this exciting Learning Community!

If you would like to learn more about this exciting ESE national program, receive program updates through our e-bulletins and be part of this learning community, subscribe to our list serve at:

www.ywca-toronto.org/ese.

Thank you for your support and interest in this exciting initiative!

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A TURNING POINT
FOR WOMEN



Canada

Funded by The Government of
Canada's Adult Learning, Literacy
and Essential Skills Program