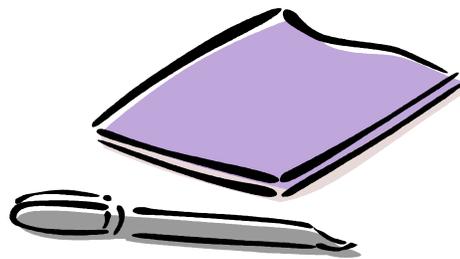# Skills for the Future Research Report

Practitioner Training Strategy
Phase Three

Community Literacy of Ontario
October 2003

Skills for the Future – Research Report
Practitioner Training Strategy – Phase Three

Acknowledgements

Skills for the Future

A Training Resource for Literacy Practitioners
Table of Contents

1)   Introduction

In 1999 MTCU developed its Practitioner Training Strategy. The goal of the strategy, initially, was to develop agreed upon methods for initial training of literacy practitioners in each stream and sector in order to facilitate the work of LBS consultants in monitoring agency compliance. There were four planned phases of MTCU's Practitioner Training Strategy. Prior to the 2001-02 funding cycle this goal was modified by MTCU. The goal of the strategy is now: To develop an integrated practitioner training and recognition approach that supports high quality delivery of the LBS Program…"

The practitioner training strategy for the Anglophone stream was researched by the four MTCU funded Anglophone delivery sectors:

- CESBA (school board sector)
- College Sector Committee (college sector)
- Community Literacy of Ontario (community literacy agencies)
- Laubach Literacy Ontario (Laubach agencies)

The other three streams involved in the practitioner training strategy are:

- Deaf/Deaf-Blind stream (GOLD: Goal Ontario Literacy for Deaf People)
- Native stream (Ontario Native Literacy Coalition)
- Francophone stream (La Coalition Francophone)

During the second phase (2001-02) of the strategy, CLO's project team developed models and implementation strategies for its sector. Two models were developed to reflect the distinct needs of CLO's practitioners – paid staff practitioners and volunteer tutors.

The work undertaken in Phase Three continued building on the skills and knowledge of practitioners currently in the field – nd volunteer.

CLO is proud of its accomplishments completed during Phase Three of the strategy:

- CLO developed and field-tested a written training manual to address the core skills needed by paid staff in our sector and circulated this manual to Anglophone community-based literacy agencies and regional networks.

- CLO implemented and tested our model for certification of tutor training with 10 community-based literacy agencies.

- CLO promoted our tutor training standard to community literacy agencies.

- CLO implemented and tested our skills recognition model for staff in 10 community-based literacy agencies.

- CLO implemented and tested our staff training standard with 10 community-based literacy agencies.

- CLO conducted a feasibility analysis of ongoing costs and strategic considerations for an organization to host, maintain and promote the certification and training system for community-based literacy agencies.

- CLO gathered input and feedback from our sector via field testing, the CLO board, ongoing information sharing (printed bulletins, e-bulletins and AlphaCom, the CLO conference and AGM, etc.)

- CLO promoted and marketed our Practitioner Training Strategy to our sector via bulletins, AlphaCom, and other marketing tools.

The following pages provide detailed descriptions of Community Literacy of Ontario's major highlights and achievements developed during Phase Three of the Practitioner Training Strategy:

⇒ *Skills for the Future: A Training Resource for Literacy Practitioners*

⇒ Provincial Standard for the Training of Paid Practitioners

⇒ Provincial Standard for the Training of Volunteer Tutors

⇒ The Implementation Study of *Pathways to the Certification* of Paid Staff and Volunteer Tutors' Skills Recognition Models and the Accreditation of Tutor Training

⇒ The Feasibility Study of Hosting *Pathways to Certification* of Staff and Volunteer Skills Recognition and the Accreditation of Tutor Training.

2) Skills for the Future: A Training Resource for Literacy Practitioners

The need to develop a training resource for literacy practitioners—specifically for paid staff—was clearly articulated by practitioners during the course of Community Literacy of Ontario's work on Phases One and Two of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities' Practitioner Training Strategy. During both of these phases, CLO solicited input and feedback from practitioners through the use of surveys, focus groups, reference groups, field tests and online discussions. In Phase Three of the Practitioner Training Strategy, CLO used the information gained in previous phases to research and develop *"Skills for the Future: A Training Resource for Literacy Practitioners"*.

CLO's Human Resource Survey reported "staff time to participate in training" and "costs related to participating in training" as two of the most frequently cited barriers to accessing training. Most respondents (86%) acquired their literacy related skills through printed manuals, files and resources. Research clearly showed that many practitioners would benefit from having access to a written training resource. By providing all community literacy agencies with a resource that can be used to educate and train practitioners, CLO will help to strengthen the literacy field. This will in turn strengthen the service that adult literacy learners receive from literacy delivery agencies.

The minimum entry-level skills list developed by CLO during Phase One, the Provincial Standard for the Training of Paid Staff developed by CLO during Phase Two and other information gained from contact with the field provided a clear direction for the content of this training resource. Best practices from adult education and literacy fields across the county and around the world were explored and examined by CLO during the preliminary stages of resource development. CLO's *"Skills for the Future: A Training Resource for Literacy Practitioners"* is a resource that will help literacy practitioners strengthen their skills for now and in the future.

Skills for the Future: A Training Resource for Literacy Practitioners: Chapter Overview

Overview of Chapter 1: Introduction

Topics covered in this chapter include:
⇒   Skills for the Future
⇒   Resource Development
⇒   Shaping our Practice
⇒   Manual Overview

Overview of Chapter 2: Understanding the Need

Not all that long ago the lack of literacy skills was seen as something that could be fixed "simply" by teaching the person to read and write. That is, the problem was defined in terms of the absence of a skill or skills. Someone was either literate or they were illiterate.

Today we know and accept that literacy is about more than just not being able to read or write or do basic math. We know it is not an all or nothing concept. We also know and accept that the lack of literacy skills limits the individual in ways that go beyond the ability to read the printed word. Analysis of the results of the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS), in which Canada participated in the mid-1990s, and other recent research has provided data that supports and verifies our current beliefs.

Topics covered in this chapter include:
⇒   The Role of Literacy in Society
⇒   International Adult Literacy Survey
⇒   Poor Literacy Skills : Reasons and Impact
⇒   Defining Literacy
⇒   le and Structure of Community-based Organizations
⇒   unity-based Philosophy

Overview of Chapter 3: Understanding The Role of Your Agency

The move toward a formalized learning outcomes approach also plays a role in shaping what we do and how we perceive learning and learners. This approach fits naturally into the community-based setting. If fact, when applied to all that we do as literacy practitioners it ensures that planning—whether for service delivery, actual instruction or for our own professional development—is situated in an environment that supports and encourages real growth and new learning for everyone involved with the agency. An overview of the MTCU's Literacy and Basic Skills Program is provided in Chapter 3.

Topics covered in this chapter include:

⇒ Service Delivery in Ontario
⇒ Literacy and Basic Skills Program
⇒ Core Quality Standards
⇒ Learning Outcomes Approach
⇒ LBS Learning Outcomes Matrix
⇒ Your Community-Based Organization
⇒ Qualities of Community-based Literacy Organizations
⇒ Organizational Planning

Overview of Chapter 4: Understanding The Role of The Volunteer

Our approach to service delivery and agency management is shaped by the role that volunteers play within literacy agencies. Volunteers are not simply unpaid labourers and specific management skills are needed. In order to support volunteers in literacy agencies, Chapter 4, Understanding the Role of the Volunteer, shares information on best practices in volunteer recruitment, screening, training, support, supervision and recognition. CLO's Provincial Standard for the Training of Volunteer Tutors is also included.

Topics covered in this chapter include:

⇒ The Role of the Volunteer
⇒ Economic Value of Volunteers
⇒ Volunteer Involvement
⇒ Volunteer Recruitment
⇒ Volunteer Screening
⇒ Volunteer Intake and Training
⇒ Supporting Volunteers
⇒ Volunteer Recognition and Retention
⇒ Volunteer Exit

Overview of Chapter 5: Understanding The Adult Literacy Learner

How learning happens and the factors that impact on someone's ability to learn are woven together to form the complex tapestry that is an adult literacy learner. Our approach to the delivery of literacy instruction has been shaped by both MTCU's program guidelines and by recent work in Ontario on the topic of self-direction. Research has validated what many practitioners know (based on both intuition and practical experience) about the important role that self-direction plays in the learning environment. This research has also provided the field with some tools that will help to ensure that practitioners can gain the skills to ensure that the learners in their programs are given both support and opportunity. In Chapter 5, The Adult Literacy Learner, the "Basic Principles of Adult Literacy Education" provides a strong foundation. This chapter looks at the roles that motivation and self-direction play in learner participation and it provides suggestions for strategies that can help establish a learning environment that is built on mutual respect, trust and collaboration.

Topics covered in this chapter include:

⇒   The Adult Literacy Learner
⇒   Learning Outcomes Approach
⇒   Principles of Adult Education
⇒   Principles of Adult Literacy Learning
⇒   Learner Motivation
⇒   Motivation and Participation
⇒   Motivation and Instruction
⇒   Self-Directed Learning
⇒   Increasing Self-Direction
⇒   Building Metacognition Skills
⇒   Learner Participation
⇒   Learning Disabilities
⇒   Learning Styles
⇒   Multiple Intelligences
⇒   Goal-Setting

Overview of Chapter 6: Identifying and Meeting Learner Needs

The task of assessing and identifying the learning needs of adults in literacy agencies in Ontario is placed between two strong and equally demanding forces: one of actual learning (what is learned and how it is learned) and the other of accountability (how you prove it was learned). In Identifying and Meeting Learner Needs (Chapter Six), a learning outcomes approach provides a framework for discussing learner involvement from intake to skill demonstrations. The sample strategies and suggested approaches were developed in consultation with practitioners from across the province.

Topics covered in this chapter include:

⇒ Identifying and Meeting Needs
⇒ Common Assessment
⇒ Assessing Learning Needs
⇒ Types of Assessment
⇒ Intake
⇒ Initial Assessment
⇒ Identifying Learning Needs
⇒ Training Plan Development
⇒ Placing Learners at the Correct Level
⇒ Choosing Materials
⇒ Planning Lessons
⇒ Effective Ongoing Assessment
⇒ Learner Involvement
⇒ Formal and Informal Assessment

Overview of Chapter 7: Instructional Strategies

Chapter Seven, Instructional Strategies challenges practitioners to think about process in the development of instructional strategies in a learning outcomes environment. The chapter uses three domains of the Ministry of Training, University and Colleges (MTCU) Learning Outcomes Matrix—Communications, Numeracy and Self-management/Self-direction as the framework for discussion. Sample instructional strategies are provided and a list of suggested resources (print, online and software) is provided at the end of each section.

Topics covered in this chapter include:

⇒ Making Learning Relevant
   g Learning Effective
   y Models
   ies for Developing Learning Activities

⇒ The Role of Motivation

⇒ Encouraging Self-Directed Learning

⇒ Self-Management and Self-Direction Domain

⇒ Communications Domain

⇒ Read with Understanding for Various Purposes

⇒ Write Clearly to Express Ideas Strategies

⇒ Speak and Listen Effectively Strategies

⇒ Numeracy Domain

Chapter Overview: Learner Exit and Follow-Up

Learners are important sources of information about the programs they are attending. Chapter Eight, Learner Exit and Follow-up looks at the process of exit and the types of information that should be collected—for both program planning and to meet funder requirements. Sample strategies are provided. MTCU's reporting requirements for exit and follow-up activities are also explored.

Topics covered in this chapter include:

⇒ When Learners Leave

⇒ Funder Requirements

⇒ Planning For Leaving

⇒ Exit Assessments

⇒ Transition Planning

⇒ Program Evaluation

⇒ Follow-Up

⇒ The Unplanned Exit

⇒ Stop-Outs or Drop-Outs?

⇒ Identifying "At-Risk" Learners

⇒ Lost Contacts

⇒ Establish A Base Line

⇒ Reducing Lost Contacts

Chapter Overview: Professional Development

The focus of Chapter Nine is on Professional Development. The literacy practitioner is central to the process of literacy education for adults. Daily, practitioners make decisions about the experiences that an adult literacy learner will have while a part of that agency's literacy program. It is through the professional development activities of practitioners that the field will develop and change and that new directions and possibilities will be explored. The value of professional development must be recognized for its potential to improve literacy instruction and practice.

Topics covered in this chapter include:

⇒ The Role of Professional Development
⇒ Practitioner Profile
⇒ Key Principles for Professional Development
⇒ Self Evaluation Tool
⇒ Professional Development Options
⇒ Training On The Job
⇒ Volunteer Work
⇒ Workshops and Seminars
⇒ E-Learning
⇒ Distance Education
⇒ Portfolios
⇒ Mentoring
⇒ Research Inquiry

3)   Provincial Standards for the Training of Paid Staff and Volunteer Tutors

Community Literacy of Ontario developed provincial standards for the training of paid practitioners and volunteer tutors based on feedback received from the community-based literacy sector during phases one and two of the practitioner training project.

Validation copies of these standards were circulated to the community-based literacy sector during CLO's Annual General Meeting in October 2002 and via a general mailing early in November 2002. Included with the validation copies of the standards were fax-back feedback forms that asked for validation and suggestions for changes or improvements.

A telephone survey of agencies was also conducted in March 2003 to look specifically at the different components of the two standards. Community-based literacy agency staff were asked whether their agency currently delivered training that would meet these standards and if they had suggestions for changes, deletions, or additions. Agency staff were also asked how they felt in general about the standards and their applicability to the needs within their agencies.

The following is a summary of the faxed responses to the validation copies of the standards and of the information obtained during the individual agency telephone survey.

Standard for the Training of Paid Staff

In our field today few would argue against the need for clearly defined requirements for paid literacy practitioners. Without a doubt literacy practitioners need to know about adult literacy and basic skills education and they must have an understanding of relevant theories of adult learning. They should also be familiar with instructional strategies for reading, writing and numeracy as they relate to the needs of individual learners and the goals of these learners.

Overwhelmingly, literacy practitioners felt that Community Literacy of Ontario has developed a standard that reflects the needs of their agencies. It is important to note that this standard also strongly reflects what many community-based literacy agencies are already doing. This is a testament to the high standards that have already been established in community-based literacy agencies.

The components of initial training were discussed during the telephone surveys. For the most part respondents were in agreement with the components and felt that their agencies delivered training that met the recommended standard.

Responses to the ongoing training section of the standard were more varied. In general there seemed to be difficulty in having agencies approach ongoing training in a "systematic" manner. This can be attributed to the fact that ongoing training opportunities for community-based literacy agencies cannot be predicted in advance. It is CLO's hope that our brand new resource, *Skills for the Future: A Training Resource of Literacy Practitioners* will be a useful tool in this area.

Standard for the Training of Volunteer Tutors

The large majority of those surveyed felt that this standard reflects the needs of their literacy agencies. Overwhelmingly, the feedback was positive, again reinforcing the existing strengths of community literacy agencies. The main points to be considered are:

1) This standard reflects what many community-based literacy agencies are already doing.
2) It was noted that some of the volunteer roles are staff roles in some agencies.
3) There is a wide variance in community-based literacy agencies on the time spent on tutor training. This is not to say that the recommended 15 hours in the standard is unreasonable; it will only raise the bar.

Conclusion – Provincial Standards

After careful analysis of the survey responses it was encouraging to see that respondents were impressed and in agreement with the two training standards. The feedback received on the validation copies of the standards was extremely helpful. The standards have remained primarily the same as originally stated in the validation copies and only minor changes were made based on the responses to the surveys. These documents will definitely set the bar for community literacy agencies and are a positive step toward having consistent training standards in community-based literacy agencies across Ontario.

The finalized standards for the training of paid staff and volunteer tutors were launched and distributed, along with *Skills for the Future: A Training Resource for Literacy Practitioners,* to participants during Community Literacy of Ontario's Annual General Meeting in September 2003. There was also a general mailing to Anglophone community-based literacy agencies, regional literacy networks, sectors and representatives from MTCU and NLS in October 2003.

Community Literacy of Ontario's

Provincial Standard for the Training of Paid Practitioners

in Ontario's Community Literacy Agencies
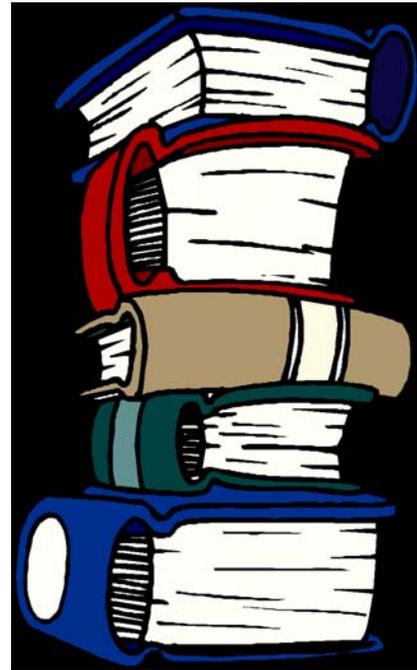
September 2003

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The information included in Community Literacy of Ontario's *"Standard for the Training of Paid Practitioners"* is intended to assist agencies by supporting and increasing professionalism in the literacy field. This Standard is geared towards practitioners: those who work directly with learners in some capacity. CLO hopes that this Standard will also be a useful tool in assisting agencies in the complex area of practitioner training.

The use of the standard is strictly **voluntary** and agencies should feel free to make allowances where necessary to allow for the range of experience that paid practitioners may already have when they join your agency. It is also recognized that agencies are organized in different ways. It is hoped that agencies will strive to meet the full standard wherever possible, making adjustments as necessary to fit the uniqueness of individual community agencies.

PART 1: INITIAL TRAINING

The agency is committed to providing staff members with the opportunity to gain and practise skills. Training can be delivered by a variety of methods (e.g., on-the-job, face to face, online, self-directed, workshops, manuals). Training should cover the following core components:

Understanding the Need
⇒ Defining literacy and the role of literacy in society
⇒ Understanding the reasons for poor literacy skills
⇒ Understanding the role of community literacy agencies
⇒ Including the reasons why people come to community-based programs
⇒ Examining the factors affecting learning
⇒ Looking at the effects of low/limited literacy skills on an individual
⇒ Broadening the awareness of literacy issues in Canada and what this means locally

Understanding the Role of Your Agency
⇒ Understanding service delivery in Ontario
⇒ Understanding the LBS Program
⇒ Creating a positive learning environment
⇒ Monitoring, evaluating and recording the learner's progress
⇒ Supporting a commitment to active/on-going learning
⇒ Examining community planning for literacy services
⇒ Accessing regional and provincial support/training

Understanding the Role of the Volunteer
⇒ Understanding the importance of volunteer involvement
⇒ Recruiting, screening, supporting, evaluating and recognizing volunteers
⇒ Providing initial and ongoing training to volunteers
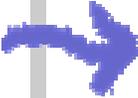
Understanding the Adult Learner

⇒ Understanding the principles and theories of adult literacy education
⇒ Highlighting the characteristics of adult literacy learners and adult learning principles
⇒ Examining challenges and solutions to learning for adult learners
⇒ Recognizing and accommodating special needs
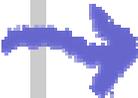
Delivering Service

⇒ Information and referral
⇒ Learner intake
⇒ Assessment (initial and ongoing)
⇒ Training plan development
⇒ Training (literacy instruction)
  * Lesson planning
  * Reading theory and application
  * Approaches to writing and spelling
  * Strategies for teaching numeracy skills
  * Learning styles
  * Record keeping
⇒ Learner exit and follow up
⇒ Using a learner-centred, goal-directed approach
⇒ Ensuring learner participation
⇒ Using a learning outcomes approach
  * Understanding learning outcomes
  * Appropriate use of all domains and skill levels
  * The role of self-management/self-direction in assessment and demonstration activities

BENEFITS OF INITIAL TRAINING:

Initial training of paid practitioners can:

⇒ Support the delivery of quality instruction to adult literacy learners;
⇒ Give employers and employees (practitioners) a clear understanding of the core components of training needed by new staff;
⇒ Give employees (practitioners) the opportunity to gain skills and knowledge and provide input into their training;
⇒ Allow practitioners to understand the needs and the challenges of the adult literacy learner;
⇒ Allow practitioners to successfully implement and apply their skills and knowledge to the training of volunteers and learners.

PART 2: ONGOING TRAINING

The agency should be committed to providing **all** staff members with the opportunity to gain and practice skills, both on the job and through a variety of training activities. Ongoing training can be delivered by a variety of methods (e.g., on-the job, face-to-face, online, self-directed, manuals, and at conferences or workshops). Ongoing training can enable community literacy agencies to further strengthen and support their paid practitioners.
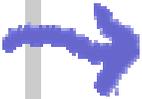
Ongoing training of paid practitioners should:

⇒ Encourage practitioners to develop a professional development plan that will help meet current and changing learner, program and community needs and goals
⇒ Focus on the continuous improvement of practitioners' skills and knowledge and on the continuous improvement of the field as a whole
⇒ Be incorporated into the agency's planning process
⇒ Be supported financially and with release time, within individual agency's means

BENEFITS OF ONGOING TRAINING:

Ongoing training can:

⇒ Support the delivery of quality instruction to adult literacy learners;
⇒ Support practitioners to participate in ongoing training opportunities;
⇒ Move practitioners forward personally and professionally;
⇒ Provide direction to practitioners with regard to ongoing training needs;
⇒ Help program managers and boards to frame job descriptions and performance appraisals.

Community Literacy of Ontario's
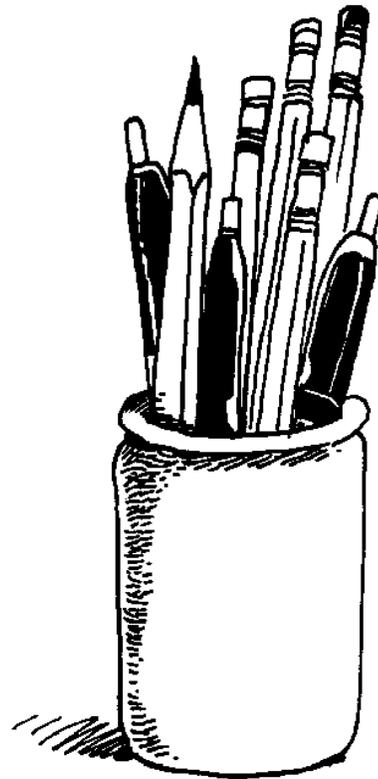
Provincial Standard for the Training of Volunteer Tutors

in Ontario's Community Literacy Agencies

September 2003

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September 2003

After extensive research within the community-based literacy field, the following *"Standard for the Training of Volunteer Tutors"* was developed by Community Literacy of Ontario. It is CLO's hope that this standard will set the bar and recognize the professionalism of community literacy agencies. The use of the standard is strictly **voluntary** and is meant to provide agencies with a tool to evaluate and enhance the practices currently being utilized. It is also meant to inspire and encourage agencies to look at the components of their tutor training and work towards consistency across Ontario.

INTAKE

The Canadian Human Rights Act

The agency respects the conventions of the Canadian Human Rights Act by accepting applications from potential tutors without discrimination.

Benefits:
⇒ Diversity is encouraged.
⇒ The volunteer base in agencies reflects the community in which they deliver service.

Standard Information Package

It is recommended that the agency provides potential tutors with a standard information package that contains: information about the position, the length of the required training, any qualifications or skills needed, costs (if any) associated with training, information about the screening and selection process, and about the types of supports the volunteer will receive from the agency, confidentiality agreements, an application form and a written position description.

Benefits:
⇒ Potential tutors have a clear understanding of the position, responsibilities, qualifications and required skills.
⇒ Standard information allows all potential volunteers to make informed decisions about continuing with the process.

Application Form

It is suggested that the agency provides all potential tutors with an application form that collects at a minimum the following information: name and contact information, education, employment history, relevant skills, availability and two references; and requires the applicant to provide a writing sample. The application also includes written information about the agency's screening and intake process and any rules regarding confidentiality.

Benefits:
⇒ Potential volunteer tutors are given the information they need to make an informed decision about continuing with the process.
⇒ Completed applications provide agencies with the information to make an informed decision about inviting potential tutors to the initial training.
⇒ Key information is given to the volunteer about the importance of the learning process taking place in a safe, comfortable environment.

🎯 TRAINING and SERVICE DELIVERY

Service Delivery

The agency is committed to the delivery of a learner-centred, goal-directed service to adult literacy learners.

Benefits:
⇒ Everyone is aware of this commitment and works toward it.
⇒ The learning needs of adult literacy learners are understood and respected.
⇒ The aims of the LBS Learning Outcomes Approach are achieved.

Initial Tutor Training

The agency delivers, or participates in the delivery of, initial tutor training that provides potential tutors with the opportunity to gain and practice skills. It is recommended that the training is at least 15 hours in length and uses active learning and a variety of delivery methods to maximize the opportunity for learning. Common components should be included for provincial consistency.

Benefits:
⇒ The quality, effectiveness and consistency of training and service delivery are maintained.
⇒ Volunteers have had initial training and understand the needs and challenges of the adult literacy learner.
⇒ Learners are matched with trained and committed volunteers.
⇒ Volunteers are given opportunities to gain skills and knowledge and provide input through active participation.
⇒ The credibility of the community-based literacy delivery system is ensured.

CLO recommends that initial tutor training include the following components:

Understanding the Need: Reasons why people come to community-based programs; Factors affecting learning; Effects of low/limited literacy skills on an individual; Awareness of literacy issues in Canada and what this means locally.

Understanding Your Role: Creating a positive learning environment; Using a learning outcomes approach; Monitoring and recording the learner's progress; Commitment to active/ongoing learning; Knowing your responsibilities as a tutor.

Understanding the Adult Learner: Characteristics of adult literacy learners and adult learning principles; Accommodating learning styles; Understanding special needs; Goal-setting; Supporting learner input and participation.

Understanding Service Delivery: How to get started with teaching Reading, Writing and Numeracy; Introduction to the five LBS Levels; Using appropriate strategies for teaching Reading, Writing and Numeracy; Lesson planning and tutoring with an outcomes-based focus; Finding, creating, and modifying learning materials; Providing feedback to learners and the agency.

ONGOING SUPPORT AND EVALUATION

Commitment

The agency is committed to the ongoing support and training of its volunteer tutors.

Benefit:
⇒ Volunteer tutors get the resources, support and ongoing training they need within the individual agency's means.

Evaluation

It is recommended that the agency provide an opportunity for volunteer tutors to participate in an evaluation process.

Benefits:
⇒ Volunteers receive feedback on their performance.
⇒ Learners receive better instruction.
⇒ The ongoing training needs of volunteers are identified.
⇒ Volunteers receive information on what supports, resources and ongoing training are available from the agency and how to access them.
⇒ The volunteer tutors' confidence in their ability to do their job is increased.

VOLUNTEER EXIT

Exit process

The agency has a clear process in place for volunteer exit. This process includes both voluntary and involuntary volunteer exits. Volunteer exits also may involve either leaving the agency completely, or exiting a specific match or volunteer position within an agency.

Benefits:
⇒ The rights of the learners, the volunteer tutors and the agencies are protected in the circumstance of a voluntary exit.
⇒ The rights of the learners, the volunteer tutors and the agencies are protected in the circumstance of an involuntary exit.
⇒ Appropriate matches are supported and inappropriate matches are adjusted as necessary.

4)   Implementation Study:

**Pathways to the Certification of Paid Staff and Volunteer Tutors'
Skills Recognition Models and the Accreditation of Tutor Training**

As mentioned earlier, as part of Phase 3 of the Practitioner Training
Strategy Project, Community Literacy of Ontario committed to the
following deliverables:

- Implementing and testing CLO's Pathways to Certification skills
  recognition model for STAFF with 10 agencies in our sector

> As part of our research CLO also explored the idea of the certification
> of volunteer tutors. At CLO's May 2002 Strategic Planning Meeting,
> the CLO board of directors had requested that this concept be further
> explored to see if there was a desire for this model in the field.

- Implementing and testing CLO's Pathways to Certification model for
  accreditation of TUTOR training with 10 agencies in our sector

To implement and test the certification models, extremely detailed
surveys were distributed to community-based literacy agencies in
Ontario. Agencies were given considerable time to work through the
surveys and see how the systems would actually work. Agency staff
were also asked numerous questions about the models and were walked
through the entire process to see if these models were something that
community-based literacy agencies would be willing to use and if
agencies would in fact be able to implement the models satisfactorily. The
responses to the individual systems are described in the following pages.

Literacy practitioners' response to the certification models for paid practitioners and volunteer tutors

a) Literacy Practitioners' Certification Model

When literacy practitioners were asked about the skills and core competencies that are required to be demonstrated in the proposed portfolio system, overwhelmingly the response was that literacy practitioners would not have difficulty in demonstrating that they had acquired these skills. Some of the skills were perceived as being more difficult to demonstrate than others and it was also noted that a few of the skills were not necessarily entry-level skills, but skills that would be acquired over time. It is important to mention that those surveyed felt that not all of the skills would be applicable to all practitioners.

When asked about the length of time that would be required to compile a portfolio that demonstrated the skills and core competencies, the results varied greatly. The responses ranged from practitioners not having any idea, to a full year being required for completion of the portfolio.

Of the literacy practitioners who were surveyed, 78% said that they would be willing to complete the portfolio certification process. There was some concern however, regarding the amount of time that this process could potentially take. 17% of the literacy practitioners surveyed felt that some of their peers would be willing and others would not, depending on the length of time they had been in the field.

Practitioners who were willing to go through the certification process would do so because they felt that certification would give them a sense of professional pride, would provide evidence of making a difference, would enhance their qualifications, would allow for validation from their peers, would provide evidence for the community, would allow them to model behaviour, would reflect positively on the program; would be good for new hires and some felt they would probably learn something new as they researched their portfolio!

All of the surveyed practitioners felt that $50 was a reasonable cost for the process - 78% were willing to pay themselves and 11% felt that the literacy agency should pay. 89% of the practitioners would be willing to go for re-certification, and every five years seemed agreeable to the majority. It was also mentioned that only new material or requirements should be assessed and added to the current portfolio at the time of re-certification.

All of the practitioners felt that CLO's certification process would be sufficient for them to feel that they were truly "certified". This would be true, particularly if the rest of the field and other sectors recognized the certification. Community-based literacy practitioners would like to see the certification process recognized more broadly, i.e. by MTCU and other organizations.

Overall comments on the certification process for paid practitioners were positive, however there were concerns voiced regarding the time commitment, the financial concerns re: lost contact hours while completing the process, the fear factor that practitioners might feel about not being good enough, and some felt the size of the task seems a little overwhelming and onerous. And as mentioned previously, the practical applicability of the skills component to all staff was questioned.

b) Volunteer Tutors Certification Model

Of the literacy practitioners that were surveyed, 10% felt that volunteer tutors would not be willing to go through a portfolio certification process, 60% felt that some volunteer tutors might be willing if it were for their own personal reasons and 20% felt that their tutors would be willing to go through a certification process under any circumstance.

The fee of $50 for the certification process seemed to be generally ... however the response to who should pay for volunteer ... was divided. There was not consensus about whether the ... ncy or the volunteer should pay.

In response to being asked whether volunteers would consider themselves to be certified after completing accredited training, 89% of the practitioners felt that the volunteers would consider themselves to be certified after going through this process. It was interesting to note however, that not all of the practitioners necessarily agreed that the volunteers should be considered "certified" after completing accredited training.

The majority of practitioners surveyed felt that the volunteers would need more demonstrations and parameters. They couldn't just be "seat warmers". A probationary period to demonstrate that they could use the skills that they were taught was one suggestion. It was suggested that a certificate be offered for completion of training and certification after placement or work experience. A second stage whereby volunteers compiled a portfolio was also suggested. It was felt that more practice and experience would be needed before certification of volunteer tutors should happen.

On the other hand several agencies felt that the volunteers should be certified and that a practicum was not necessary. Another idea that was proposed was a certificate, like a coaching certificate.

When the MTCU's Practitioner Training Strategy moves forward, the process for the certification of volunteer tutors will require further study as to how it could be linked to our current proposed model for the accreditation of tutor training.

Literacy Practitioners' response to the accreditation of tutor training

When asked if the recommended process for the accreditation of tutor training was one that they would be willing to undertake, 90% of the literacy practitioners responded positively.

There were some comments however that it could be time consuming and agencies should get something for it. Practitioners felt that pursuing the accreditation would give agencies the personal satisfaction of meeting field established standards, would promote a stronger profession, would provide recognition of qualifications for the community, would provide recognition of qualification to other sectors, would lend credibility to the organization and individual tutors and would show that the community-based literacy agencies value their tutors. It is important to note that several agencies did express concern regarding the amount of time they feel the process will take. For example, the agency that responded "no" to the accreditation process did so because they felt that it was too time consuming.

All of the agencies felt that support would be required during the accreditation process. This support would be required in the form of: review of material prior to submission, clear outlines of expectations, samples existing practices, standardized material and guidance.

All of the agencies were willing to pay for accreditation and felt that a cost of $50 was reasonable. Agencies were in favour of renewing their accreditation every three to five years with the emphasis being on five years. It was also felt that only new material or required changes should be evaluated for re-accreditation.

Conclusion – Implementation Study

Accreditation would be welcomed by community-based literacy agencies and the agencies surveyed feel that they could currently meet Community Literacy of Ontario's provincial training standard which was developed based on criteria deemed essential during phases one and two of the Practitioner Training Strategy.

5)   Feasibility Study:

Hosting Pathways to Certification of Staff and Volunteer Skills Recognition and the Accreditation of Tutor Training

For the final deliverable of CLO's Practitioner Training Strategy Phase 3 Project, CLO conducted a feasibility analysis of the ongoing costs and strategic considerations for an organization to host, maintain and promote the certification and training system for our sector.

This feasibility analysis was conducted by researching other provincial certification systems beyond the literacy field. CLO looked at the processes, fees, supports and ongoing costs to host and maintain these systems. This enabled CLO to project anticipated costs for an organization to host the proposed Pathways to Certification system.

Comparison of other certification systems

Three provincial certification systems were studied. The first system CLO researched was Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). This system is more common in North America and large state sector colleges in Britain. Because of this TESOL is the most commonly requested certification on job postings for ESL positions. TESOL offers a five-day course with 20 hours in-class instruction, 2 hours of at-home self-study, and a practicum lesson to demonstrate skills acquisition. They do not require final exam and certification is granted after completion of the 20-hour course. The fee for this course and materials is $845. The only support required is during in-class time and there are not any on-going costs.

CLO also researched the certification system offered by the Ontario Society for Training and Development. Established in 1945, they are a not-for-profit membership association dedicated to the profession of training, workplace learning and human resources development. OSTD

has over 1500 current members. Their certification process consists of a peer review assessment of practical skills, applicants' work experience; a knowledge exam; and a skill demonstration. There is not a set time limit, however most candidates complete the process within 1-2 years. OSTD is currently looking at the re-certification process. All forms are available online which eases the level of support required from the organization. All applicants' must be members of OSTD and have five years of work experience. The fee to complete this process is $695.50.

The last certification system CLO studied was offered by the Professional Administrators of Volunteer Resources – Ontario (PAVRO). Their process involves pre-certification with the inclusion of the applicants' philosophy statement, assessment form, application form, and resume, a PAVRO membership, all to be reviewed by a Certification Committee. Once the pre-certification is successfully completed, a confirmation letter, requirements for written and oral presentations, topics for oral/video presentations, education summary sheet, and a supervisor evaluation form are sent to the applicants. Certification is then completed when applicants submit verification of 40 hours within the past 3 years for professional development, of which 15 hours must be PAVRO sponsored or approved sessions. Applicants must also submit 2 written narratives and an oral or video presentation. The fee for this process is $133.75 with further costs of $54 per year and applicants must maintain 60 continuing education credits per 30-year period to maintain certification. Supports are required in the form of a certification committee, judging panel, and administrative staff to process the paperwork.

Conclusion – Certification Systems

After looking at the other external systems, and comparing our proposed certification models the following observations can be made:

- CLO's proposed system is subjective
- CLO's proposed system may grant practitioners certification too easily
- A test or exam, or an essay component would add to the systems' credibility
- Proposed fee is too low – it is unlikely that MTCU will carry the difference in cost and CLO cannot absorb this additional expense
- CLO's certification system needs to allow time for experience and commitment
- Certification process and time commitment is large
- CLO's proposed system would require extensive time from CLO staff to support
- CLO's proposed system could work with revisions
- CLO's proposed system would allow for professional credibility across Ontario
- Parts of CLO's system are similar to other external systems
- The foundation for the proposed system is solid

Anticipated costs for maintaining system and supports

The host organization of the certification system would be required to spend approximately eight hours supporting each applicant. There would also be expenses in the form of telephone, rent, marketing, website preparation, supplies, etc. While it is difficult to estimate the full support costs, the costs to support each applicant would be approximately $175. This does not cover the other costs that have been outlined. With our current proposed fee of $50 per person, MTCU would be covering at a minimum $125 per person without taking the other expenses into account. In addition to an estimated start-up cost of approximately $15,000 to develop a comprehensive website and supporting materials.

It is safe to estimate that CLO would require additional core funding in the amount of $15,000 per year to run and maintain the proposed certification and accreditation systems.

At this point in time, our recommendation is that CLO would *only* be able to host the certification system if we received an annual grant to perform the demanding tasks required due to the size of the proposed system and its requirements.

Also, the goal of MTCU's Practitioner Training Strategy is to develop an *integrated* practitioner training and recognition approach that supports high quality delivery of the LBS Program. CLO believes in this proposed *integrated* approach and thus wonders how our proposed certification system would fit in with the other sectors and streams. CLO also wonders whether MTCU may want to consider an organization that will manage any certification or training systems for all sectors and streams, allowing for an integrated and highly credible approach that would be recognized across the literacy field.

6)   Where do we go from here?

MTUC has placed further phases of the practitioner training strategies projects on hold at this time. However, CLO has developed certification and accreditation models that could work in the community-based literacy sector.

Practitioners feel that they would be able to successfully demonstrate the required competencies in the form of a portfolio, which when reviewed by a panel of peers, would lead to certification on a provincial level. The proposed accreditation of tutor training was also favourably received and literacy agencies feel that they would be able to demonstrate that their current tutor training meets CLO's recommended standard.

The reaction to the certification of volunteer tutors was not as positive. The general response indicates that only small numbers of tutors would be interested in certification, and only if it were to their personal advantage to take it. The answer to the question of who would pay for tutor certification was also divided. Further exploration will be required before this piece can move forward. It would be advisable to consult further with volunteer tutors themselves, perhaps through the use of focus groups or additional surveys.

Minor tweaking would inevitably be required to examine and refine the required skills and requirements of practitioners for certification and firm guidelines would need to be set with regards to the time and material that would be required from agencies. CLO would also need to examine the requirements for the practitioners' portfolios to determine whether other sectors and streams could potentially recognize them. It is possible that a further component would need to be added to the certification models in the form of an essay or test. These additional requirements fit with other certification and accreditation systems of non-literacy provincial organizations.

A review of the practitioner training strategies projects from the other sectors and streams will need to occur for an integrated approach to certification and accreditation to happen. It is also extremely important to emphasize that CLO's proposed models would require solid and consistent financial backing from MTCU in order to properly implement and maintain the system. When the time comes for an actual rollout of strategies, the proposed Pathways to Certification systems would be ready for implementation after final revisions were completed.

While the future for certification and accreditation systems remains uncertain, two products from the Practitioner Training Strategy have emerged as tools that meet the current needs of community-based practitioners. Community Literacy of Ontario's Standards for the Training of Paid Practitioners and Volunteer Tutors and the *Skills for the Future: A Training Resource for Literacy Practitioners* are stand-alone resources.

In the 2004 round of proposals, Community Literacy of Ontario will be submitting a proposal to NLS and MTCU to further develop *Skills for the Future: A Training Resource for Literacy Practitioners* into a series of highly accessible and downloadable training modules from CLO's website. CLO will further propose to offer a series of real-time, interactive workshops using Centra's state of the art online virtual classroom.

While CLO's proposal would benefit from being linked to MTCU's broader practitioner training strategy, it also can stand alone as a valuable training resource should MTCU not continue with its practitioner training strategy.

Our board and staff are extremely hopeful that this innovative and highly valuable proposal will receive funding from MTCU and NLS in the next round of proposals.