

ADULT LEARNER FRIENDLY INSTITUTION – CANADIAN STYLE (ALFICan)

**2006 Recognizing Learning:
Recognizing Skills Conference
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Human Resources and
Skills Development Canada

Ressources humaines et
Développement des compétences Canada

Presenters

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Interests and Goals

**PLEASE IDENTIFY ISSUES/QUESTIONS
ABOUT ALFI**



The 'ALFI' Project

- 'ALFI' in the USA –CAEL (Council for Adult and Experiential Learning), a national non-profit, higher education association founded in 1974
- CAEL and its ALFI project promote the interests of adult learners worldwide

The ALFI Agenda

- The ALFI Project creates tools and shares information for institutional improvement on behalf of adult learners
- Institutions must have the leadership, resources, values, culture, and motivation to engage in a process of adaptation and change

Adult Learner Profile

- Definitions of the adult learner vary according to who is doing the defining
- Seven traits shared by many adult learners over age 24
- Provide reasonably accurate picture of non-traditional adult learner

Common Characteristics

- Delayed enrolment into post-secondary education
- Attending part-time
- Financially independent
- Working full-time while enrolled
- Having independents other than a spouse
- Being a single parent
- Not having a standard high school diploma
- Frequently motivated to study for career/work-related reasons

ALFI – “Original Six” (Site Visits)

- SUNY Empire State College, Albany, New York
- College of New Rochelle, New Rochelle, New York
- School for New Learning, DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois
- Sinclair Community College, Dayton, Ohio
- Marylhurst University, Marylhurst, Oregon
- Athabasca University, Athabasca, Alberta

Plus three:

- Governor’s State University, University Park, Illinois
- Brevard Community College, Melbourne, Florida
- Regis University, Denver, Colorado

The Over-Arching Theme Resulting From the Benchmarking Study

“The adult learning focused institution has a culture in which adult-centred learning, sensitivity to learners’ needs, flexibility and communication drive institutional practice.”

ALFI Key Principle of Effectiveness

1. Outreach
2. Life and Career Planning
3. Financing
4. Assessment of Learning Outcomes
5. Teaching/Learning Process
6. Student Support Systems
7. Technology
8. Strategic Partnerships

ALFICan Initiative – HRSDC/FNTI

Phase 1

Tasks:

- Develop Research Framework
- Find Project Partners
- Educational Institutions and Non-Educational Organizations
- Implement ALFI Institutional Self-Evaluation – Phase II

Confirmed Partners for Phase II

- Cambrian College – Ontario
- Prairie West College – Saskatchewan
- First Nations Technical Institute
- Nova Scotia Community College
- Maxwell College – Ontario (Private Vocational College)
- Red River College – Manitoba
- Brandon University
- Ryerson University – Ontario (G. Raymond Chang School of Con. Ed.)
- Town of Newmarket – Ontario (Human Resources Department)
- Adult Learning Centres in Manitoba
- Canadian Auto Workers Education Department
- Abbot Agency – Ontario Community Based Employment Service

Manitoba Adult Learning Centres (ALCs)

Background:

- Adult Learning Centres are registered under the *Adult Learning Centres Act*
- Mature Student High School Diploma
- 2006-2007: 44 registered and over 70 sites
- Registered and funded on an annual basis

Why did we participate?

- ALFI self-assessment provided a common language
- To identify gaps
- To validate what was happening
- Community based programs
- Provide adult focussed learning opportunities to adults

Lessons Learned

- Power of the community of learning between the ALCs
- Needs to be a voluntary process
- Value in sharing of best practice
- Self assessment tool was valid for ALCs
- Proved to be extremely valuable for the ALCs
- Team building process (staff development)
- High level of esteem to be an ALFI
- Need to update the self assessment

ALFI Presentation in Winnipeg

- Organized by Adult Secondary Education Council (ASEC)
- 50 adult educators
- Introduction of the ALFICan
- Sharing of experiences by 4 ALCs
- Test driving the tool

Adult Learning Centres: Next Steps

- ASEC: plans to lead an ALFI group
- ASEC: presentation at the conference this week
- Mentoring of new ALFIs
- Self assessments valuable for application process for registration
- Collaboration and sharing of work
- Sharing of *Best Practice* between ALCs
- Involving the adult learners in the self assessment

Phase II - Implementation

Steps and Tasks:

1. Create National Advisory Body
2. Advisory Board Meeting
3. Identify Institutional Coordinators
4. Meet with Institutional Coordinators and Team Members
5. Project Partners perform institutional self-evaluation
6. Follow-up visits
7. Prepare and distribute Summary Report
8. Reconvene National Advisory Body
9. **Publish study results.**

Purpose of ALFICan Workbook

- Guide to help institutions to become more adult learning focused
- Assist in gaining institutional support to respond to changing demographics



Provides Content, Tools and Information to:

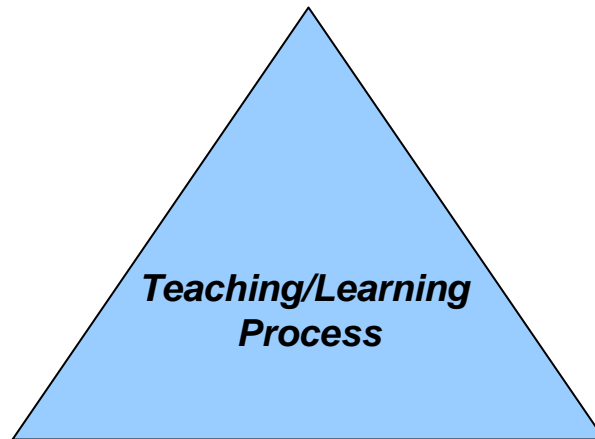
- Informally assess your institution's services to adult learners
- Locate and mobilize vital institutional and community support/resources to identify and close gaps in services to adult learners
- Participatory and action-oriented
- **“Take the pulse”** of your institution related to adult learner services

Collecting Evidence to Support Best Practice Performance

- Best evidence is directly related to principles/performance indicators
- Learner feedback (surveys, letters, kpi)
- Annual reports from departments, schools
- Examples of changes implemented
- Learning outcomes – departments, programs, courses
- Faculty training – programs, resources
- Observation of class sessions
- Discussions with adult learners
- Memberships in organizations promoting adult learning agenda
- Books, publications

Triangulation of Evidence

Formal (Written) Institutional
Mission Statement



**Syllabi from a variety
of courses in which
adult learners are the
majority**

**Letters of verification
from current students
and recent adult
learner graduates**

ALFI Focus Group – May 30 & 31, 2006

ALFI Principles of Best Practice:

- A healthy process;
- Can facilitate change; and
- Enable adult education providers to best position themselves in marketplace.

Conclusions

- ALFI principles are a useful way to identify strengths, gaps, inconsistencies in services to adults
- For most part, ALFI principles are applicable in the Canadian context
- Finance principle problematic – wide variations in funding approaches
- Study confirmed ALFI self-evaluation scale is a reliable method of assessing organizations' performance against benchmarks

Possible Next Steps

- Establish **ALFICan** practitioner network to advocate for change in service to adult learners
- Refining terminology to ensure use in diverse settings
- Develop complementary learner feedback tool
- Create **ALFICan** designation for Institutions completing self-evaluation process