

# **Final Report**

An On-line Portfolio Development Model for the Going to Canada Portal

For the Learning and Literacy Directorate, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada

Revised June 30 2004

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## A. Introduction

Human Resources and Skills Development are working in partnership with Citizenship and Immigration, Industry Canada and Foreign Affairs to enhance the Going to Canada web site so that it becomes a one-stop immigration portal. The on-line service will provide useful information for those considering immigration as well as for those wanting to make their integration into Canadian life less difficult.

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is an important vehicle for the successful integration of immigrants into Canadian communities and workplaces. The Government of Canada's report *Knowledge Matters* (2002) articulated the need to recognize the skills and knowledge of the foreign-trained and other studies confirm the issue as a pressing one for Canada's sustained economic growth. (Canadian Labour Force Development Board, 1998; Conference Board of Canada, 2001; Canadian Labour and Business Centre, 2002)

The PLAR portfolio is both a process and product that can facilitate the recognition of immigrant learning, while introducing the individual to Canadian institutions, workplaces and customs. By developing an on-line portfolio model, the Government of Canada is one step closer to realizing its goals:

- Attracting and selecting highly skilled immigrants
- Developing an integrated and transparent approach to the recognition of foreign credentials
- Better supporting the integration of immigrants into Canada's labour market.
- Helping immigrants to achieve their full potential over the course of their working lives<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Knowledge Matters <http://www.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/sp-ps/sl-ca/doc/summary.shtml#immigration>

On March 1, 2004, the Learning and Literacy Directorate, Human Resources and Skills Development contracted with the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) to develop an on-line portfolio development model by March 31, 2004. Project activities included 1/ web research into existing on-line portfolio programs and resources 2/ a survey of stakeholders 3/an advisory committee meeting to receive research findings and to review a draft model, an overview of the content and delivery options 4/ framing a final model with recommendations for implementation, support services and sustainability.

#### Limitations of the Study

Within the four-week time frame, a conceptual framework for on-line portfolio development was delivered. It is CAPLA's intention that other professionals will use the model in their development of the web site and the e-curriculum for the portfolio program. The language within this report is written with this in mind. Throughout the report, reference is made to the immigrant in the singular tense. We acknowledge that there may be multiple users of the on-line portfolio, including family members and immigrants already residing in Canada.

## **B. Project Description**

The approach to this project was to create a process that would build our knowledge base sequentially over the period of the study. The objective of the first activity, a general Internet search, was to examine on-line portfolio development as it currently existed across Canada. The outcomes of the Internet search informed the second activity which was a targeted e-mail survey requesting the views of key PLAR practitioners about on-line portfolio activities. This activity resulted in a wealth of information from which the elements of the draft model were derived. The third and final activity was an advisory committee meeting held on March 29, 2004 to review the draft model developed through the preceding activities. Participants rose to the challenge of re-thinking and re-framing the model. An outcome of the meeting was the repositioning of the model within the broader context of the immigration process. Other overall project recommendations, related to implementation and delivery have been referenced in the final pages of this report.

## 1. Web Search

The research began with a review of the Government of Canada's web sites focused on immigration. "Canada International" provides access to services for non-Canadians. This site links to "Going to Canada" which links with information in the broad categories of visiting, studying, working temporarily, immigration and refugees. The second site visited was that of Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Through this link, "A Newcomer's Introduction to Canada" section was found which listed essential and important documents to bring to Canada.

While there is an abundance of resources on portfolio development from which to draw, locating on-line portfolio development is problematic. The issue of the currency and quality of the information offered remains a challenge in evaluating any on-line learning/teaching endeavor.

## 2. Survey

A survey was undertaken of people within immigrant serving agencies, organizations, institutions and government that had been involved in on-line portfolio development or prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) in Canada to identify on-line practices, opportunities and challenges. The survey<sup>2</sup> was distributed electronically to organizations serving immigrants, provincial and territorial governments, and educational institutions. Respondents were given the choice of responding verbally or through email. Organizations invited to participate in the survey included: Human Resources Skills Development Canada, Industry Canada, Campus Canada, Sector Councils; Skills for Change, the Maytree Foundation, York Region Neighbourhood Services; Universities of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Athabasca; Red River Community College, Mohawk College, Conestoga College, Nova Scotia Community College, First Nations Technical Institute; PLA Centre, Nova Scotia; ministries of education in Quebec, Prince Edward Island; independent consultants. As of March 31, 2004 seventeen people had responded.

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<sup>2</sup> Appendix A

## **Analysis of Internet Search and Survey Outcomes**

For the purposes of the report, the results of the Internet search and survey have been analyzed using a model (Salmon 2002) in which e-facilitator competencies are identified within an e-learning environment. Four competencies will be used in this analysis, to interpret and describe an on-line portfolio process for immigrants. The four competencies are intellectual, technical, organization, and social.

For this analysis, 'intellectual/cognitive' factors refer to the responsiveness of design, process, and content of an on-line portfolio; identifying individual's skills that are requisite to access the portfolio process and successfully participate. 'Technical' refers to the portal infrastructure, the creation of a seamless, invisible background within which people and processes interact smoothly. It also encompasses the technical skills people require to learn/teach effectively within the e-learning environment. 'Organization' refers to communication pathways promoting interaction among clients, stakeholders, service providers, and to the creation of pathways to content presented in multiple formats. 'Social' refers to the capacity not only to connect the immigrants to the human resources within governments, institutions, and service providers in communities across Canada, but also to connect all stakeholders and participants to each other.

### **A. Analysis of Survey Responses**

#### Intellectual and Cognitive Considerations

Consistent themes emerged throughout the survey process regarding the application of the principles of adult learning, best practices, and constructivist theory. The on-line portfolio development process needs to reflect the standards for e-learning and e-portfolios. It is essential to think through the process at the outset, taking into account the differing skills and abilities of the user.

Respondents consistently emphasized the importance of clear communication using plain language to best convey realistic expectations regarding the purpose of the portfolio. The immigrant must develop an appreciation that portfolio development is a reflective process, and to understand the difference between learning and experience. The portfolio must be presented as a "tool" that can help the immigrant articulate experience, skills and educational credentials. Creating a portfolio should instill confidence as a result of establishing goals and working towards

their achievement. As a result of the process, the immigrant will gain a heightened awareness of his/her skills and knowledge, and acquire proficiency in expressing them in French and/or English. The immigrant will learn about Canadian culture, labour market standards, the work environment, occupational requirements, and the community where he or she may settle.

The portfolio development process can assist immigrants in identifying language issues and cultural differences between their country of origin and Canadian culture. These issues become part of the goal setting and problem solving within the portfolio process.

Three recommendations emerged strongly. The first recommendation is that the portfolio development process emphasize to immigrants the benefits to be gained by knowing where they will live and what they will do when they arrive. The second recommendation is that immigrants need to be aware of the diverse types of documentation needed to support their claims. The third recommendation is that immigrants need to be aware of the range of reactions to portfolios amongst Canadian employers. All parties should be cognizant of the risk of misrepresenting the value of the portfolio, given that advocates of the portfolio development process may place a higher value on portfolio than do employers.

The targeted e-mail survey revealed a strong commitment to both the process and content of portfolio development. Respondents also alerted us to the issues of adapting traditional classroom delivery to the on-line environment. On-line delivery of portfolio development raises questions about the adaptations of the teaching process and the transformation of the curriculum to web format. What additional skills will the professional community need? What skills will the immigrant need? These questions are addressed in the technical section.

#### Technical Considerations

To benefit from the on-line portfolio development process, the immigrant must have access to the Internet, research skills at a level that permit him/her to retrieve relevant data and/or connect with professionals who can assist. As well, he or she will need to have or acquire software skills such as word processing; converting hard copy to electronic format; scanning an image or document and selecting the appropriate output.

Respondents reported that the technology needed to be seamless, and invisible so the learners' focus is on content not the context. From the design perspective, the site requires very clean

HTML. Its esthetic features should be designed so that basic systems will function effectively thus eliminating bandwidth issues. Yet as technology evolves, it is important to use it in ways that enable immigrants to store their portfolios on-line, and to deliver their portfolios electronically or in hard copy.

Respondents reported the need to create an on-line environment with the capacity to build community. Learning in the virtual community requires a meeting place: discussion, chat, researching on-line, exchanging information via email and attachments. In order for learners to benefit from this community, they must have the hardware, basic computer skills and knowledge of the communication tools before engaging in the portfolio development process.

#### Organizational Considerations

Respondents strongly recommended an on-line orientation to the portfolio process so participants have the opportunity to become familiar with the on-line environment and the concept of portfolio development and prior learning assessment and recognition. Once the orientation is complete, the portfolio curriculum must be flexible in order to engage the immigrant by allowing him/her to begin where it seems most relevant to his/her current circumstances. The on-line portfolio development process needs to connect the immigrant with other on-line resource persons and community-based partners.

Information should be layered and provide levels of information from simple to complex. In addition, more detailed information should be available for those requiring it. The structure should include definitions, explanations, and examples should the individual choose to access (click here if you require more information) "Help" sections.

#### D. Social Considerations

Salmon's research as published in the United States Distance Learning Association journal (Volume 16, No. 5 May 2002) describes the competencies of an e-facilitator. Respondents concurred that the professional "guide" must be comfortable in the on-line environment and skilled in on-line communication techniques and/or on-line moderation. In addition, the e-facilitator needs to appreciate that an immigrant will most likely experience even greater



trepidation than a Canadian engaging in the portfolio development process, and be aware of the cultural differences that impact expectations and communication style. Some immigrants will need more support and step-by-step guidance through the initial phases of the process.

Respondents credit an active discussion forum and multiple ways for the immigrant to access the e-facilitator (email, toll-free phone, and chat) as key ingredients for participant success in the on-line environment. The e-facilitator is a person who adapts well to the “guide on the side” versus “sage on the stage” role, possesses a strong level of comfort with the technology and is skilled at moderating on-line discussion forums. Help with technical issues as well as content and process of portfolio development will create a positive environment that encourages immigrants to persevere.

## **B. Summary of Survey Responses**

Initially, portfolio development began as a face-to-face process in which learner interactions resulted in powerful synergy. Respondents cautioned that the recent emergence of on-line delivery, in response to the needs of isolated people, must not lose this synergistic quality. Any on-line model must be sufficiently flexible to serve many people via multiple mediums. In a country whose wealth depends more and more on the knowledge of its newcomers and citizens, respondents considered portfolio development and PLAR invaluable.

Throughout the survey, the respondents revealed a strong commitment to a common foundation of portfolio process and content. The content of portfolio development varies little regardless of the mode of delivery. For example, there appeared to be unanimity regarding what the portfolio should contain:

- A reflective, self-assessing process in which learners articulate who they are and what they have done in the past that has resulted in the development of knowledge and skills
- Personal and professional goals and how to attain them
- Evidence that substantiates informal and formal learning claims

### 3. Advisory Group

On March 29, 2004, nineteen people attended an advisory group meeting either in person or via teleconference at the Sheraton Gateway Hotel, Terminal 3 Pearson International Airport, Toronto, Ontario to provide advice on a draft on-line portfolio development model. Representatives from Human Resources and Skills Development, Industry Canada, Government of Ontario, Campus Canada, Red River College, York Region Neighbourhood Services, Skills for Change, World Education Services, Workplace Education, PEI and the PLA Centre were in attendance. Other stakeholders, including immigrants, also attended. Other organizations such as Citizenship and Immigration Canada and FuturEd were invited but unable to attend. The contribution of four participants who were also immigrants to Canada, two of whom had prepared career portfolios, contributed to the richness of the discussion.

The task of the advisory group was to revise the draft model which had been developed as a result of Internet search and survey processes, and to make recommendations. Key areas of discussion focused on the placement of the model within the framework of immigration, the delivery system, an overview of the content<sup>3</sup> of the model and the knowledge and skills of the e-facilitator. Their suggestions, along with those of the survey respondents, have been integrated into the final model along with the overall project recommendations.

#### Other Project Observations

Throughout the life of the project, more than eighty people were contacted by telephone and email inquiring about their knowledge of people and organizations delivering on-line portfolio development. While portfolio development is delivered on-line and at a distance, few people had a clear grasp of its availability across Canada.

It is difficult to identify all the institutions and individuals offering portfolio development on-line, as its presence fluctuates with the availability of funding and organizational commitment.

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<sup>3</sup> Beginning with Table 1

Organizations that have offered portfolio development on-line or at-a-distance include, but are not limited to, the Halifax PLA Centre (Nova Scotia); the Nova Scotia Community College; (Nova Scotia); Algouquin, Mohawk, Fanshawe and Conestoga Community Colleges (Ontario); Red River College (Manitoba); Athabasca University, University of Alberta (Alberta); British Columbia Institute of Technology and University of British Columbia (British Columbia).

On-line delivery of portfolio development raises questions about the adaptation of the teaching process and the transformation of the curriculum to web format.

### Time Line Considerations

Because the immigration process may take several years, it was recommended that the time lines connected to the portfolio development process be open-ended. Factors such as the availability of technological resources, levels of education, fluency in French/English, immigration time lines, and personal factors such as health and finances strongly impact the process.

Particular time frames may require the immigrant to revise the skills and knowledge portfolio shortly before arriving in Canada. Labour market information is subject to rapid change, and to a lesser degree, occupational standards. Significant changes in either of these areas may effect the immigrant's decisions, and may have implications for the Canadian community profile. Given these ambiguities, respondents reiterated that users must own and control the portfolio process, taking responsibility for its update and eventual use.

## **C. The Model**

### **C. Facilitated On-line Model of Portfolio Development for Immigration**

The following model represents portfolio development delivered on-line within the context of immigration and settlement. It is designed for the "Going to Canada" portal and includes an Orientation process. The recommended name is "Building Your Skills and Knowledge Portfolio for Canada". It captures both process and product and allows for maximum flexibility while incorporating the principles of adult learning.

The on-line portfolio development model (Figure 1) is a facilitated process that guides a person through structured experiences to reflection on his/her life, and to recognize his/her informal and

formal learning. It requires 1/ communication pathways, 2/ connections with resource persons and 3/ peer networks in order to be effective.

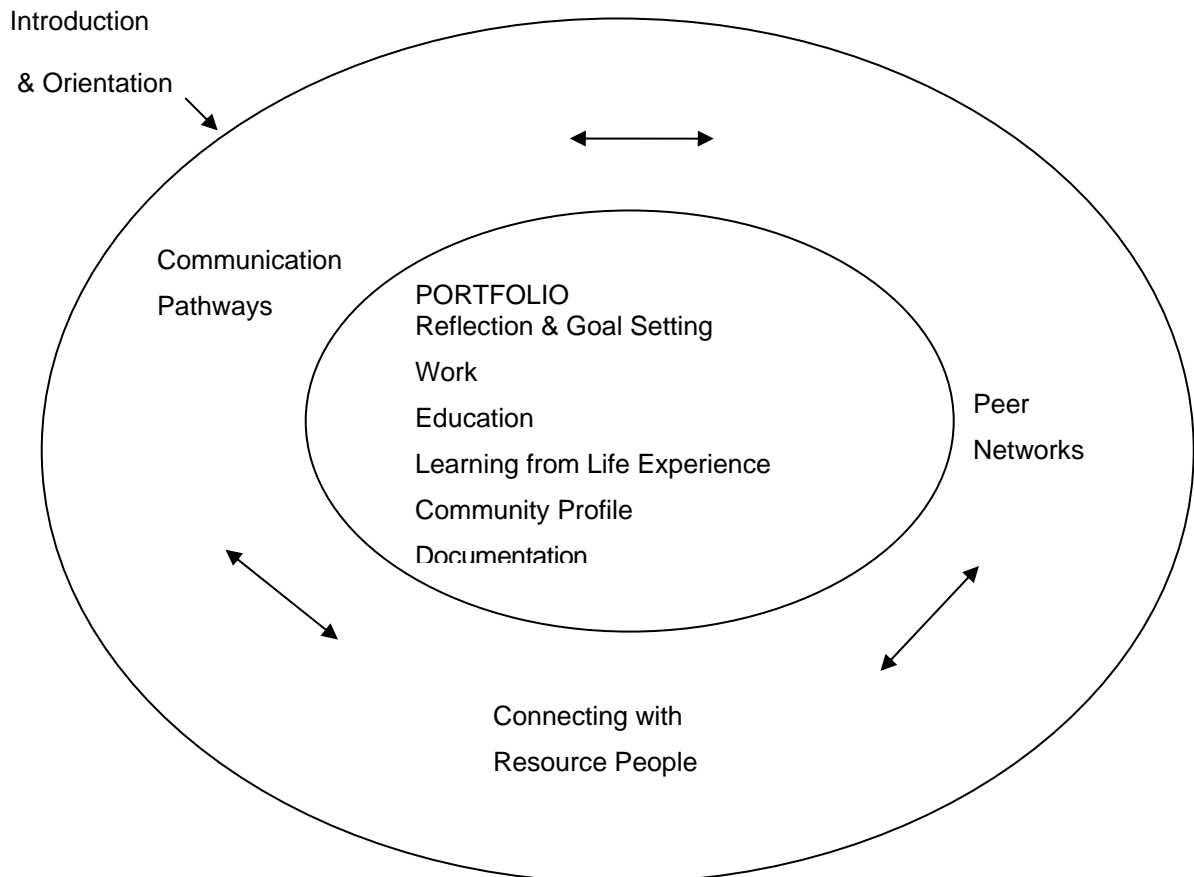
The model is illustrated using four diagrams. The first diagram (Figure 1) represents portfolio as both a process and product, dependent upon the three essential elements of communication pathways, external resources and peer networks. Each of the three essential elements is illustrated separately, in Figures 2, 3, and 4 respectively.

The Orientation process is part of the Model and is described in Table 1. It would be offered to the user as a means explaining the outcomes of the on-line portfolio process.

Finally, a suggested outline for the content of the portfolio itself is described in Tables 2 through 7.

Figure 1

Facilitated On-line Model of Portfolio Development

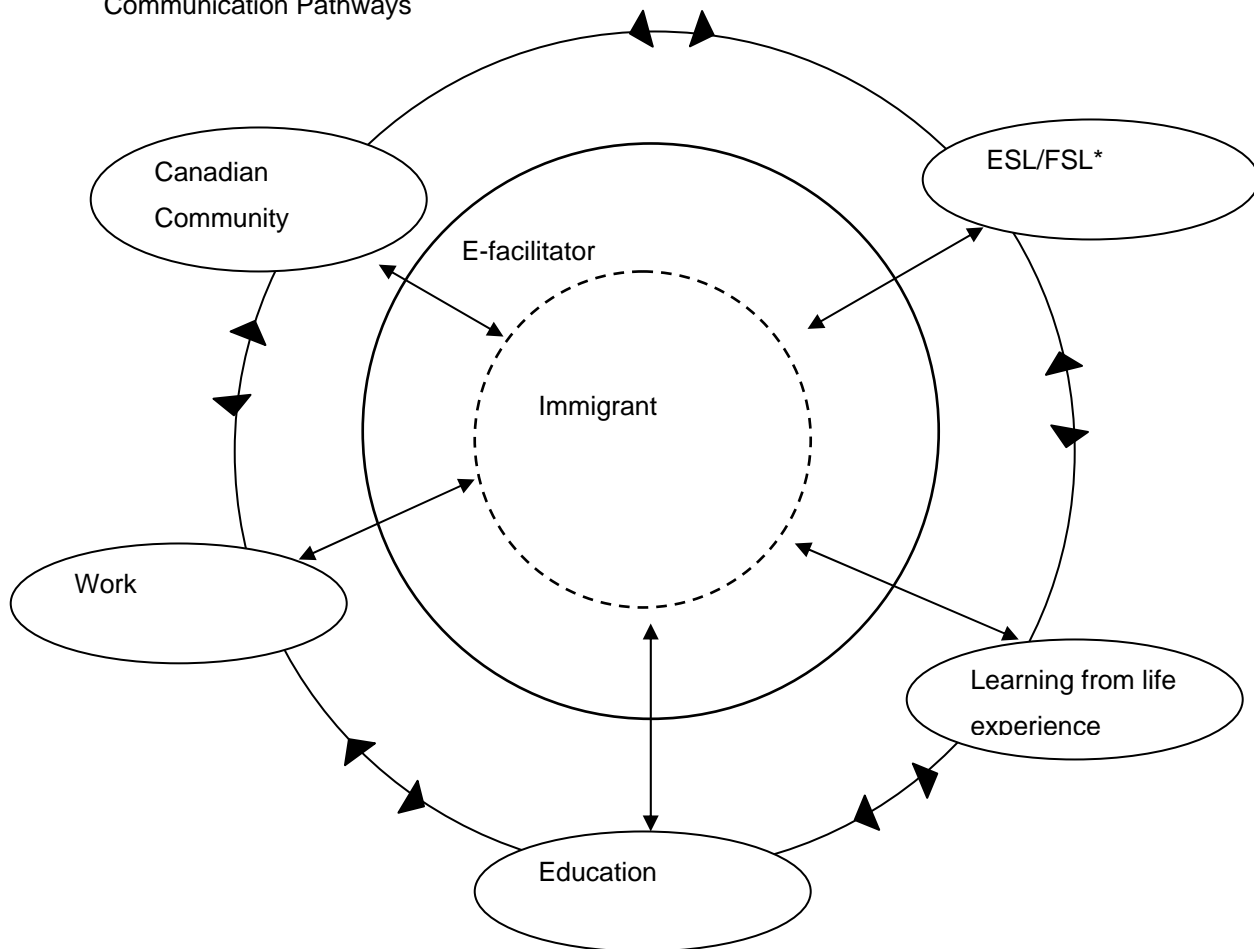


In Figure 1, the processes and content of portfolio development are contained within the large circle of the Going to Canada for Immigrants web portal. The three essential elements of the process are communication pathways, connecting with resource persons and peer networks. The inner circle lists major themes within the content of the portfolio. Together these components form an integrated system for the on-line delivery of portfolio development.

After ascertaining that the immigrant indeed wishes to explore the portfolio process, a dialogue between the e-facilitator and the immigrant determines an action plan. Creating rapport is as significant in the on-line environment as the face-to-face environment. Therefore, introducing the immigrant to the resource person who is a “topic” specialist within a specific content area of the portfolio is a key role of the e-facilitator. It is understood that some users may require less intervention than others.

Figure 2

## Communication Pathways



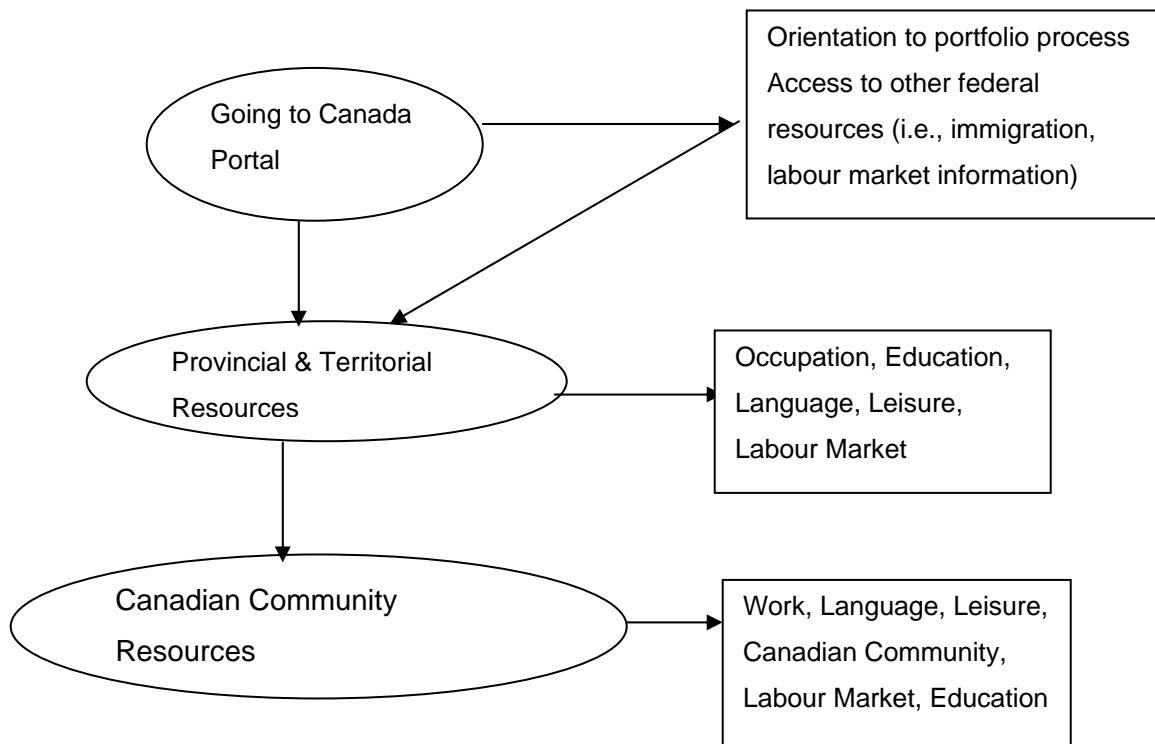
\*ESL – English as a Second Language; FSL – French as a Second Language

Communication pathways are essential to portfolio development as they personalize the on-line process. Optimally the immigrant would be linked with one person who would act as his or her “guide” throughout the development of the on-line portfolio, but given the possible two to five year waiting period before entry into Canada, it is unrealistic. Therefore, it is crucial that each e-facilitator and/or resource person accesses the same tracking data thus ensuring that the immigrant tells his/her story only once, and that everyone who interacts with the immigrant has the same information. This tracking process will need to be developed in the implementation phase.

The arrows in Figure 2 represent the two-way flow of communication between the immigrant and the e-facilitator, and the immigrant and the “topic specific” resource person. The inner circles represent the communication pathways between the e-facilitator and the resource people, while the outer circle represents the communication pathways among the resources people themselves.

Figure 3

Connecting With Resource Persons



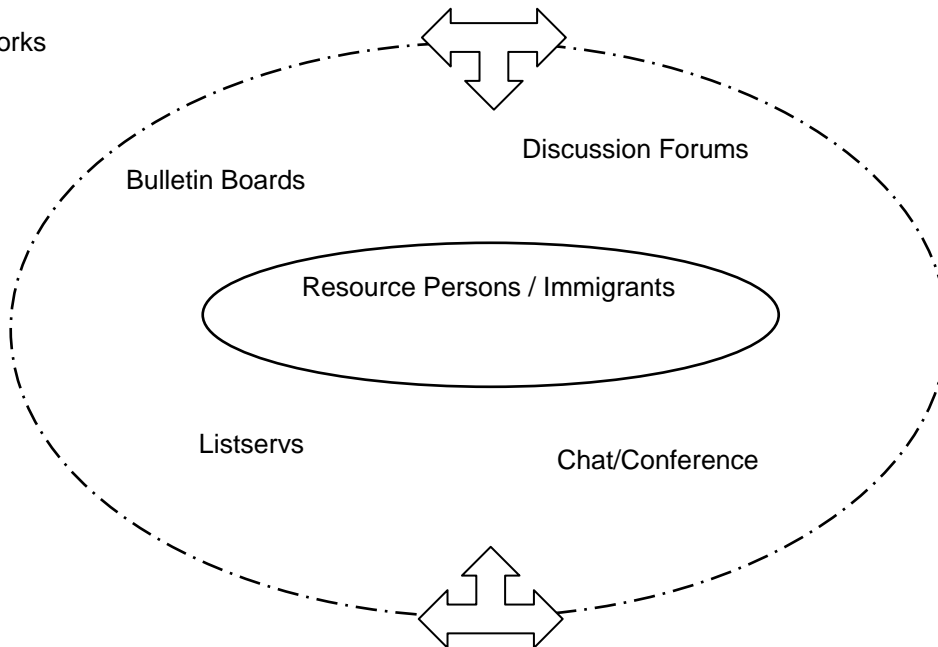
The entry into the portfolio development process occurs at the federal government level through the portal. At every level there will be appropriate resource persons to assist the immigrant with the process and/or the content. It is possible for an immigrant to work through the topic areas independently, by connecting directly with the resource persons in the community where he or she will live.

It is anticipated that users will connect with resource persons at the provincial levels especially in the areas of professional accreditation and standards, labour market trends, and education before connecting with the resource persons in the community in which they will live. The local resource people could evaluate the skills and knowledge portfolio before the immigrant enters Canada, and could become a resource for tailoring the generic portfolio for a specific use.

Figure 3 represents the full range of resources available to the user. The tiered structure of government within Canada has significant impact on the portfolio-building process. The model acknowledges the differing areas of responsibility among the three levels of government: federal, provincial, and municipal. Figure 3 illustrates the paths the immigrant may follow in the process of developing a portfolio beginning with the initial contact with federal government resources for portfolio development on the Going to Canada web portal. The immigrant working with an e-facilitator would chart a path from the resources at the federal level to the professionals within organizations serving the immigrant population at the provincial and local levels as indicated by the arrows. Once the community in which the immigrant will settle is identified, the referral to local resources, referred to as “Canadian Community Resources” is made.

Figure 4

Peer Networks





The immigrant will have made contacts with persons beyond the professionals involved in the portfolio development process. These “outside” individuals represent the first attempt at establishing a network of self-initiated contacts prior to coming to Canada. The Peer Network may include community and neighbourhood contacts, other immigrants from the country of origin, local associations and prospective employers. The strength of the Network may act to reduce the time frame and stresses associated with settlement and integration.

The inner oval represents the significant relationship between the professionals involved directly in the portfolio development process and the immigrant. The outer dotted circle represents the contacts within the broader peer network, which may grow over time. The arrows signify the communication flow around the peer network and may include communication with the network of professionals involved in the portfolio development process.

The electronic tools in Figure 4 are among those consistently, but not exclusively, used to facilitate on-line communication: chat, conferences, listservs, bulletin boards and discussion forums.

#### **D. Orientation to the Generic On-Line Portfolio Process**

Orientation stands alone as the introduction to the on-line portfolio development process. It would be undertaken as the introduction to the on-line portfolio process. Once the immigrant understands the process and outcomes, it is up to her/him to sequence the topics based on his/her situation. At each stage of the process the immigrant reviews his/her goals and assesses where next to go within the topics. Table 1 offers details on what would be included in an Orientation session.

Experts in e-curriculum, web design and portfolio development should identify appropriate print and web-based resources, and oversee their integration into a format(s) suitable for on-line delivery. This team of experts would create the Orientation and on-line Portfolio program.

Table 1

<b>Orientation – why should I develop an on-line portfolio?</b>	
<p>Immigrant:</p> <p>Who are you and what attracted you to the Going to Canada’s Orientation to On-line Portfolio Development site?</p> <p>Where are you living?</p> <p>Where are you in terms of the application for immigration to Canada?</p> <p>What are your goals? (study or work or both)</p> <p>What are your expectations?</p> <p>Where do you expect to land?</p> <p>What type of computer and operating system?</p>	<p>Facilitator:</p> <p>Introduction to the portfolio site and facilitator</p> <p>Purpose of the on-line portfolio process</p> <p>Definitions/terminology</p> <p>Types and content of portfolios</p> <p>Expectations</p> <p>Glossary of terms, work-related phrases</p> <p>How to connect with people</p> <p>Immigrant access to the Internet</p> <p>Readiness for the on-line environment</p> <p>Readiness to re-enter the labour market</p> <p>Immigrant computer system and minimum requirements</p> <p>Teaching internet communication skills, scan, digital images, downloading utility software</p> <p>Samples of Portfolios on-line for viewing (sectors)</p> <p>Ongoing Evaluation &amp; Goal setting</p> <p><i>Provided in French, English, and languages of regions from where most of Canada’s immigrants are drawn</i></p>

The Portfolio

The portfolio content is described in the following pages under the headings of reflection and goal setting, work, learning from life experience, education, language, and community profile. Each component of the portfolio will be described generically to give a flavour of the content that the portfolio may contain.

Table 2

<b>PORTFOLIO</b>	
<b>Reflection and Goal Setting</b>	
What I Have To Offer	What I Need to Research
Reflection on portfolio development process Short term and long term goals Generic portfolio or industry specific portfolio Currency of documentation Sufficient Evidence Authenticity of evidence Breadth & depth of knowledge	After completing each module you will want to return to the Reflection and Goal Setting module to reflect on your progress and revise your goals.  Employment: Is my job goal achievable in Canada?  Education: How will I achieve my educational goals?  Learning from Life Experiences: How do my life experiences compliment my employment and/or educational goals?  Language: Am I able to function in the English/French language?  Community Profile: Does this community offer what is necessary for me to work, study and live contently with your family?

Table 3

<b>PORTFOLIO</b>	
<b>Work</b>	
What I Have To Offer	What I Need To Research
<p>Describe your work experience</p> <p>Detail skills and competencies</p> <p>List job tasks</p> <p>Resume</p> <p>Letters of Reference from employers, teachers, trainers</p> <p>Testimonials from those who know me and my accomplishments in my home country</p> <p>Translated original documents</p> <p>Work samples</p> <p>Tools or equipment relevant to occupation</p> <p>Existing Networks of personal and professional contacts</p>	<p>What kind of work do you expect to do?</p> <p>What does this occupation look like in Canada?</p> <p>What documentation must I acquire in order to work in Canada? (for example, social insurance number)</p> <p>Related occupations</p> <p>Research National Occupational Classifications</p> <p>Research Industry Sectors and standards</p> <p>Research professional bodies regulatory bodies and licensing requirements</p> <p>Compare skills in relation to Canadian standards</p> <p>Labour Market trends</p> <p>Cultural awareness about ways in which finding work in Canada differs</p> <p>Mentoring programs</p> <p>Networking</p> <p>Revisit your goals</p>

Table 4

<b>PORTFOLIO</b>	
<b>Learning from Life Experiences</b>	
What I Have To Offer	What I Need To Research
Describe your hobbies, volunteer, travel and leisure activities	How do my unpaid experiences relate to my educational or job goals?
Work samples that show my accomplishments	Revisit your goals

Table 5

<b>PORTFOLIO</b>	
<b>Education</b>	
What I Have To Offer	What I Need To Research
Describe your education. This section focuses on formal education, apprenticeships, workplace training, certificates, individual courses	Research educational institutions, upgrading programs
Are you planning to study in Canada?	Which institutions offer suitable programs?
Original transcripts as well as translated copies	Is advanced standing available?
Copies of course outlines, workplace training modules	Assessment by course or by program standards or by occupational competencies
Credential assessment results	Credential Assessment Services
	How do the standards for this work/education vary across provinces?
	Where else are PLAR* resources available?
	Revisit your goals

\* Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition

Table 6

<b>PORTFOLIO</b>	
<b>Language</b>	
What I Have To Offer	What I Need To Research
<p>Languages spoken. Reading and writing capacity</p> <p>Levels of proficiency</p> <p>Are you taking French/English classes?</p> <p>Will you be taking ESL/FSL classes?</p> <p>Translation of documents (formal and informal)</p>	<p>Way of assessing current language competencies in French or English</p> <p>Where do I take TOEFL** testing?</p> <p>If not currently taking language training, where are classes being held?</p> <p>Costs of language training</p> <p>How can I improve my occupational terminology?</p> <p>Revisit your goals</p>

\*\* Test of English as a Foreign Language

**Table 7**

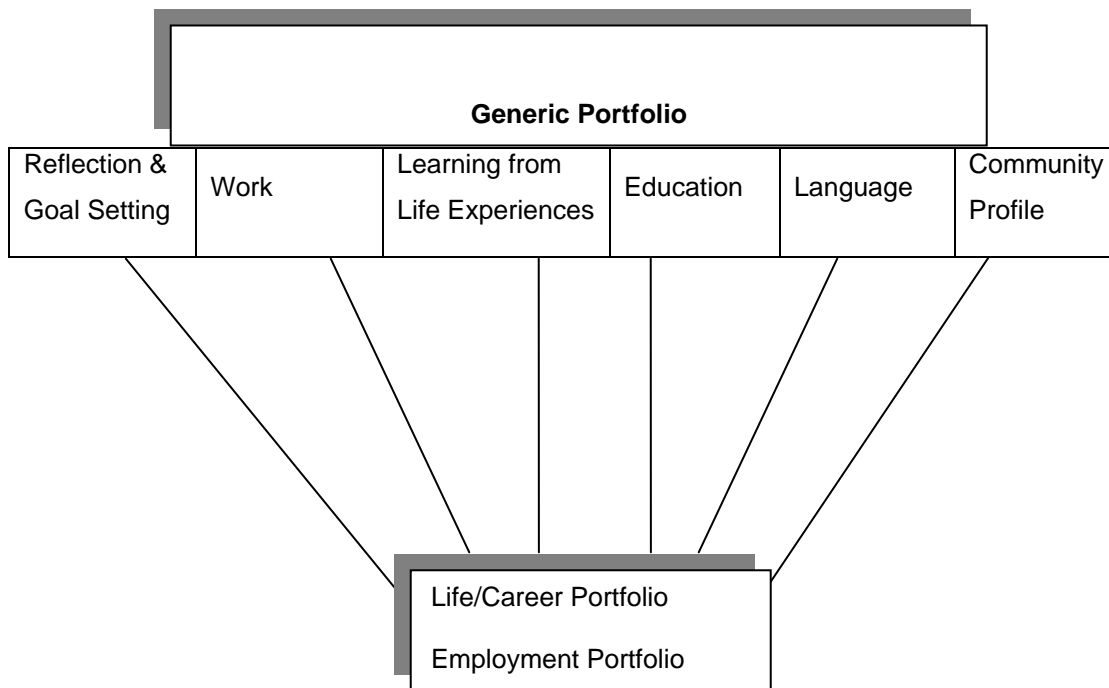
<b>PORTFOLIO</b>	
<b>Community Profile</b>	
What I Have To Offer	What I Need To Research
<p>Describe the communities (i.e., local and cultural) in which you have lived and worked.</p> <p>Describe your family, their interests and activities.</p> <p>Who among your family will be coming with you?</p> <p>Do you have a driver's license?</p> <p>Is public transportation an essential requirement?</p>	<p>Research target community: size, population, and what it is known for</p> <p>Is there a population sharing your cultural heritage in this community?</p> <p>Are you concerned about the differences in the values and beliefs you may be facing in the new community?</p> <p>Identify organizations supporting newcomers (settlement or employment assistance resources)</p> <p>Research local labour market information</p> <p>List prospective employers</p> <p>List other requirements of government-regulated services such as driver's license, health care.</p> <p>Resources for you and your family such as finding housing, hospitals, schools, costs of rent, food, budget.</p> <p>What transportation is available?</p> <p>Are there sufficient services available for the other members of your family who will be coming with you?</p> <p>Revisit your goals.</p>

**E. The Generic Portfolio**

A generic portfolio is developed through the on-line portfolio process described in the preceding pages. The outcome of such a process will be a collection of documents often called a “master or generic portfolio” from which selected items may be drawn for a specific purpose. The types of portfolios listed in the bottom rectangle of Figure 5 represent possible “targeted” applications as determined by the user. This targeted use does not restrict the use of the master generic portfolio for subsequent use. Special accommodations must be considered for users with a strong oral tradition, given that a print-based format may not be appropriate.

Figure 5

The Generic Portfolio





## **D. Overall Project Recommendations**

### **On-line Portfolio Development Must Involve an E-facilitator.**

1. On-line portfolio development must involve a facilitated process involving professionals building relationships with the immigrants.
2. The site design will be customer-focused and facilitated. It will provide the quality and depth of human interactions and resources to attract service providers to the site and to keep them returning. If first impressions are positive, both immigrants and specialists will return to the site frequently and recommend its resources to others.
3. E-facilitators must be trained in on-line communication strategies and cultural sensitivity.

### **On-line portfolio development must occur within the immigration process.**

4. The immigrant will perceive more value in the portfolio process if it is embedded within the larger context of a successful application for entrance into Canada. For example, CIC may consider offering points for the inclusion of a portfolio within the application process.
5. The process and content is presented from the perspective of the immigrant's culture and then explained within the Canadian context.

### **Quality assurance practices must be built in to the model.**

6. Before the orientation and on-line portfolio development site goes live, professionals, as well as immigrants who have already participated in a portfolio process, should be invited to beta-test the site.
7. A formative and summative evaluation protocol must be developed and incorporated as one strategy in a regime of continuous improvement.
8. Specialists should continually review the content of the portfolio web site to ensure the relevancy and quality of the information and the accuracy of the links.
9. The portfolio development process may extend over years, and therefore will necessitate a periodic re-evaluation of its content and the implications for the immigrant.
10. A strong communication network will be established to encourage the exchange of information, best practices and innovation among the community of practitioners and stakeholders.
11. The web site and all resources associated with the portfolio process should be evaluated for language level and clarity, ease of navigation, the value of the information from the perspective of the professionals and immigrants who access it.

12. Web-based content should be frequently re-evaluated for the currency and quality of its information.
13. Strong provincial PLAR networks will ensure the continued growth of the on-line portfolio process.

### **Technology Considerations**

14. Web design must ensure participation regardless of the computer operating system and type of Internet access. To meet this goal, web-based content needs to be clean, simple and operate smoothly across platforms. In the event that the immigrant does not have access to the Internet, provisions must be made for them to access portfolio development processes in other ways (i.e., a print-based course).
15. The web pages must load quickly for low-band access and the size of files controlled for quick downloading on even the most basic systems.

### **Sustainability**

16. The on-line portfolio must be free of charge for those, whose immigration plans are imminent. For those immigrants not planning to come to Canada in the foreseeable future, fee-for-service would be a way of sustaining the on-line portfolio development service.
17. Funding support that has traditionally gone into settlement services in Canada could be re-deployed to the on-line portfolio program as a pre-immigration strategy.
18. Efforts to increase awareness among employers of the value of portfolios are recommended.

**Conclusion**

The on-line portfolio development model provides an opportunity for professionals serving the immigrant community to invite immigrants to engage in a process of reflective learning, to gather a diverse collection of primary and secondary documentation to support educational and experiential learning and to build a plan for a more rapid and successful integration into Canada. The model also promotes the involvement of every level of government. In addition, it will engage the community in which the immigrant will eventually reside. In addition, it will assist the immigrant in forming an attachment to the local community.

CAPLA feels confident that prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) generally, and on-line portfolio development specifically, will contribute to the successful integration of immigrants into Canada.

Respectfully submitted,

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## Appendix A - Survey

### CAPLA Project

HRSD has contracted with CAPLA to collect data about distance and on-line portfolio development as it currently exists in Canada through Internet research and interviews with stakeholders across Canada. The goal is the development of an on-line portfolio model based on consensus for the "Going to Canada" web portal. As a stakeholder in this field, we are soliciting your input through this survey.

### System of Delivery

If someone goes on this web site what are the key messages s/he is looking for?

On the government's Going to Canada web site, what kinds of information would you expect to see on PLAR and Portfolio Development?

What would be the best way(s) to offer portfolio services to immigrants in different parts of the world? "At a distance" may include:

On-line delivery via the Internet with all content being web-based, offering discussion forums, chat, and email

Course content offered in hard-copy and/or disk or CD-ROM with instructor support

### Portfolio Content

Traditionally the portfolio process is reflected in the key themes of the course: self-assessment of skills and competencies, formal and informal learning accomplishments, personal style, documentation, career planning and goal setting. There is also a component in which learners decide on what use the portfolio will be, in accordance with their immediate goals. This may include labour market research identifying the "fit" between the individual and the benchmarks of his/her occupation, research into the requirements in an academic setting or as a tool for advancement directly into the labour force and community. The collection of diverse documents testifying to the skills and accomplishments claimed is the strength of the portfolio.

If someone were coming from over seas, hat would s/he need to know about developing a portfolio?

In what ways might the process and content of Portfolio Development be adapted for immigrants and newcomers to Canada?

What are the unique needs of immigrants and newcomers that Portfolio Development course would need to address?

NB: If you deliver a Portfolio Development course, please provide a course of study that includes learning outcomes, on-line and print resources, a table of contents, the duration of the course, and number of instructor hours/week allotted for the course. Please indicate if your course is offered face-to-face, at a distance or a combination of both. If size is a factor, please "snail" mail the package to Carole Cotton, 209 Upper Paradise Road, Hamilton ON L9C 5C1.

#### Technology Requirements

In this context, technology requirements refers to the availability of the technology, the skills individuals need to use the technology, and the learning management system that would support learners' participation.

What technical skills do you believe an immigrant requires to access and benefit from a web site devoted to Portfolio Development?

What are the technological challenges that need to be addressed when creating a user-friendly web site for immigrants?

If you were to offer an on-line Portfolio Development course what technical issues would your organization face?

#### Student Support

Student support refers to the adjunct services an organization provides that enhance the likelihood of student success.

What types of supports do you think immigrants might want as they begin the process of building a portfolio before coming to Canada?

What is the minimum level of student support that learners should expect to receive to enhance the likelihood of their success? Student success could mean the following: Counseling, Reading/Writing clinics, Peer mentoring, Technical support

What additional supports might learners benefit from?

How do we support the less-technically skilled?

#### Canadian Application(s)

This section refers to available resources that learners can access when they are considering uses for their portfolio in Canada. For example, information about the labour force, employment opportunities in provinces/territories, occupational standards developed by specific sectors and program learning outcomes from academic institutions may be useful to learners when they reflect on their knowledge and skills within the Canadian landscape.

What resources are available to help learners find out about expectations/standards of Canadian employers, academic institutions, and occupational/professional bodies?

Where can benchmarks be found to assist learners in focusing their learning accomplishments?

**Portfolio Development Practitioner / On-line Facilitator**

What are the implications for the Portfolio Development Practitioner and the standards and guidelines with on-line service/delivery?

What complementary skill sets should the on-line facilitator/ portfolio development practitioner possess?



## **Appendix B - EPortfolio Quality Standards**

The ePortfolio should list and describe skills and knowledge in a way that is recognized and respected by the labour market partners.

The ePortfolio should have the capacity to be a complete inventory of skills and knowledge acquired by the individual regardless of where they were acquired.

An individual should develop and own his/her ePortfolio. Some people may require informed assistance to achieve this. The use of the ePortfolio and any change to it should be completely controlled by the individual.

The content of the ePortfolio should be current, accurate and verifiable.

The ePortfolio should allow flexibility to accommodate unique or industry-specific skills.

The ePortfolio should follow a standardized format. The ePortfolio content and format should link to existing and developing labour market exchange systems.

The ePortfolio and its development process should be relatively simple and straightforward.

The development and use of the ePortfolio for any and all Canadians should be barrier-free; that is to say, social identity, disability and geography should not be barriers to individuals.

The development and content of an ePortfolio should be bias-free.

An ePortfolio should not create barriers; for example, a person who does not have an ePortfolio is not discriminated against for the lack of one, or for the skills revealed.

## **Appendix C – Advisory Committee Participants**

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