BC Hospitality Workplace Essential Skills Project

Phase One: Assessment & Provincial Delivery Recommendations

Respectfully Submitted to The BC Ministry of Advanced Education by:

Vancouver Community College

With the support of

Thompson Rivers University

College of the Rockies

linkBC
**June 2008**  
**BC Hospitality Workplace Essential Skills Project**

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

The BC Hospitality Workplace Essential Skills Project was undertaken as a response to a call from the Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED) to determine how effectively the public post-secondary education system was responding to the workplace essential skills requirements of individual sectors. The results of Phase One assessment are designed to inform a potential set of pilot programs around the province in a follow-up phase.

This assessment focuses on the growing tourism/hospitality industry and follows the terms of reference as presented by AVED. The project was coordinated by the LinkBC network and facilitated by the lead participating institution: Vancouver Community College (VCC). Other participating institutions included College of the Rockies (COTR) and Thompson Rivers University (TRU).

This combination of schools was useful: VCC was able to provide the perspective of an institution serving a large urban area, COTR the perspective of rural, small town BC and TRU the perspective of a mid-size interior community.

The purpose of this project is to provide an overview of current resources available in the hospitality sector (note definitions below) and to identify skill gaps and potential training interventions that could be applied on a provincial scale. The following five steps were undertaken:

i. The project coordinator researched available resources and studies relating to tourism/hospitality workplace essential skills needs.

ii. VCC initiated an environmental scan including structured interviews. *See Environmental Scan for details.*

iii. Interviews were conducted with go2, the provincial resource for people in tourism, and with the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (CTRHC), the federal resource for people in tourism.

iv. Focus groups and meetings were held at COTR in Cranbrook to assess initial findings from VCC and to identify particular issues from a rural small town perspective. Interviews were held with employers.

v. Focus groups and meetings were held at TRU in Kamloops to assess initial findings from VCC and COTR and to identify particular issues from a regional interior mid-size community perspective. Interviews were held with employers.
Primary research included an environmental scan to determine the aforementioned criteria, i.e. resources and gaps. The National Applications of Working and Learning (AWAL) informed the design of this research project. AWAL assists adult educators to make better connections between academic offerings and essential skills criteria, critical for success in the workplace. Following AWAL methodology, industry contacts were established through Program Advisory Committees (PACs) and/or through alternative professional association networks. The Project Coordinator conducted structured interviews with hospitality industry representatives from human resources and/or from management. Data was gathered on workplace culture, industry products and services, employment requirements and training practices related to an Essential Skill framework. Interview questions and a list of interviewees are included in the Appendices of this report.

Project Team Members included:

COTR: Carrie Schafer and Greg McCallum
LinkBC: Terry Bubb and Terry Hood
TRU: Anne Terwiel and Dave Twynam
VCC: Sally Gibson, Jim Peacock and Jonathan Rouse

2. PROFILE OF SECTOR AND EMPLOYEES

BC Tourism/Hospitality Sector Overview

It is important to understand the reciprocal relationship between hospitality and tourism. Tourism is acknowledged as a universal industry label; hospitality is a major subset of the tourism industry with a particular focus on hotel management and food & beverage operations. Tourism consists of many sectors including:

**Tourism Services**
- Visitor Information
- Reservation Services
- Destination Marketing
- Consultants
- Tourism Educators
- Government Departments
- Research Services

**Accommodation**
- Hotels, Motels, Inns & Lodges
- Campgrounds
- Time-share Facilities

**Attractions & Cultural Tourism**
- Museums & Galleries
- Heritage & Historic Sites
- Parks, Gardens & Interpretive Centres
- Cultural, Industrial & Aboriginal Tourism

**Food & Beverage**
- Restaurants & Dining Rooms
- Coffee Shops & Quick Service Outlets
- Pubs, Lounges & Nightclubs
- Catering Operations
This study focuses primarily on the hospitality sectors including accommodation and food & beverage services, specifically within the context of hotel operations. These sectors account for the majority of entry-level positions in the hospitality industry.

Tourism, on the other hand, includes all of the aforementioned categories, which is important within the context of destination marketing. The growth of large hotel chains and increased interest in vacation and/or time-share concepts has also increased global interest in Canada as a destination.

Additionally, British Columbia’s spectacular and diverse natural environment, the draw of special events such as the 2010 Winter Olympics, the expansion of meeting destinations throughout BC, including the Vancouver Convention & Exhibition Centre and increasing interest in Aboriginal culture and tourism underpin the notion of tourism as a growth industry.

3.0 CANADIAN & BRITISH COLUMBIA PERSPECTIVES

3.1 Accommodations

Nationally, accommodation is one of the largest and fastest growing sectors in the tourism industry. In 1997, approximately 173,000 workers were employed in hotels and other lodging operations in Canada. Between 1986 and 1996, accommodation services experienced a substantial growth of 39%. One reason for this growth includes the extension of seasonal markets, e.g. conferences during the summer at ski resorts.

Those who are looking for employment opportunities in accommodation services can take advantage of this considerable growth. New jobs are continually being created, possibilities are growing for accelerated career advancement, and opportunities for positions in differing regions and types of establishments are expanding.

Anticipated labour demand by 2015 is 19,150 new workers; the projected rate of annual employment growth is 3.0%
3.2 Food & Beverage Service

Canada’s food & beverage industry is a $32 billion a year industry that currently employs over 700,000 people.

This sector encompasses all types of establishments that supply food & beverages for consumption, from fine dining specialties, ethnic restaurants and institutional food outlets, to catering firms, pubs and lounges. Food & beverage is also a major employer of youths and a training ground for many people who are beginning their working careers.

Changing consumer preferences and escalating competition are increasing the sophistication of management and business practices by food & beverage operators. Many restaurants are launching retail food product lines to diversify their interests and expand their market share. Other specialty establishments market their products to the corporate and business community. Food & beverage chains have established niche markets in bookstores, department stores and in casinos.

As the lines between traditional food & beverage operations and other industries blur, employers and employees alike must learn to respond to changing customer expectations with innovative ideas and service strategies that provide exceptional tourism experiences and that result in repeat customer visits.

Anticipated labour demand by 2015 is 44,300 new workers.

3.3 Tourism Needs 84,000 Skilled Workers by 2010

*In the report entitled: Recruit, Retain & Train, go2 suggests that tourism is an industry with a weak internal labour market. There are no set educational requirements for employment in most occupations, and neither pay nor promotions have been linked to certification.*

*The workforce development strategy must therefore focus heavily on recruitment and retention initiatives, not just on training tactics.*
3.4 Tourism Occupations in BC – COPS Employment Projections to 2010

The most current provincial labour market data for tourism/hospitality shows a steady growth rate. In the report entitled Recruit, Retain & Train, go2 suggests that there will be growth in over 20 tourism related occupations and that there will be thousands of openings in a wide range of occupations.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant &amp; Food Service Mgrs*</td>
<td>18,634</td>
<td>24,850</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>6,216</td>
<td>4,401</td>
<td>10,617</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodation Service Mgrs*</td>
<td>8,190</td>
<td>11,150</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>2,960</td>
<td>1,870</td>
<td>4,829</td>
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<td>Conference &amp; Event Planners</td>
<td>1,249</td>
<td>1,803</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>553</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>824</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Leaders in Recreation</td>
<td>8,679</td>
<td>11,498</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>2,819</td>
<td>887</td>
<td>3,706</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Service Supervisors*</td>
<td>4,967</td>
<td>6,230</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>1,263</td>
<td>707</td>
<td>1,971</td>
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<tr>
<td>Executive Housekeepers</td>
<td>1,354</td>
<td>1,657</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>303</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>497</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chefs*</td>
<td>3,648</td>
<td>4,880</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>1,032</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>1,557</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooks*</td>
<td>27,687</td>
<td>33,380</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>6,193</td>
<td>3,734</td>
<td>9,927</td>
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<td>Bakers</td>
<td>5,476</td>
<td>6,249</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>745</td>
<td>1,519</td>
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<tr>
<td>Travel Counsellors</td>
<td>3,624</td>
<td>3,653</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>352</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ticket &amp; Cargo Agents &amp; Rel</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>118</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hotel Front Desk Clerks*</td>
<td>3,864</td>
<td>4,150</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>620</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tour &amp; Travel Guides</td>
<td>525</td>
<td>655</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>191</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outdoor Sport &amp; Recreation Guides</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maitres D'Hotel &amp; Hosts</td>
<td>3,291</td>
<td>3,766</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>475</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bartenders</td>
<td>5,819</td>
<td>6,626</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>807</td>
<td>512</td>
<td>1,319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food &amp; Beverage Servers</td>
<td>32,324</td>
<td>37,193</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>4,868</td>
<td>2,855</td>
<td>7,723</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Service Counter Attendants</td>
<td>23,547</td>
<td>28,874</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>5,327</td>
<td>3,153</td>
<td>8,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen &amp; Food Service Helpers</td>
<td>19,074</td>
<td>23,350</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>4,275</td>
<td>2,532</td>
<td>6,807</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendants in Amusement &amp; Rec</td>
<td>4,941</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>1,059</td>
<td>656</td>
<td>1,715</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Occupations in BC</td>
<td>1,949,089</td>
<td>2,204,052</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>254,963</td>
<td>313,704</td>
<td>568,667</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Advanced Education: COPS 2001 Scenario
*amended for selected occupations in response to more detailed analysis of BC industry growth trends

3.5 Tourism Workforce Distribution in 2001

Distribution of tourism workforce occupations has remained consistent over time.

A shortage of appropriately skilled workers will increase the risk of:

- Declining customer satisfaction – and then, as a result, a
- Decline in repeat visitors.

Total direct tourism workforce (as of 2000): 111,890
Total tourism-related workforce (as of 2001): 266,900
4.0 HOSPITALITY/TOURISM ASSOCIATION RESOURCES

The tourism industry is currently served by these key national and provincial organizations, which have human resources development and education mandates.

4.1 The Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (CTHRC)
http://www.cthrc.ca/

CTHRC, tourism’s federally funded sector resource, works on behalf of 164,000 businesses that make up Canada’s tourism sector. Established in 1993, the CTHRC promotes professionalism throughout the sector and addresses key labour market issues. Collectively, council members and the CTHRC bring together Canadian tourism businesses, labour unions, associations, educators and governments to co-ordinate human resource development activities and contribute to a sustainable, globally competitive tourism sector. CTHRC has developed an excellent reputation for its leadership role in the establishment of national occupational standards, related training materials, and professional certification. CTHRC standards-based training resources are marketed under the brand name “emerit.”

4.2 go2
http://www.go2hr.ca

go2 is tourism’s provincial human resource organization. Go2 was created by the BC tourism industry in 2003 as a result of an 18-month task force involving more than 100 industry representatives and stakeholders around the province, to deal with labour shortage and other human resource issues. Through its programs and services, go2 – an independent, non-profit industry association, assists BC’s tourism industry to recruit, train and retain employees and to support industry growth. Some of the programs go2 administers include:

- FoodSafe http://www.foodsafe.ca
- Serving It Right http://www.servingitrigh.com/
- Emerit http://www.emerit.ca/

go2 is charged with the implementation of the province’s human resource development strategy: Recruit, Retain and Train. It was also recently designated the provincial Industry Training Organization (ITO) for the tourism/hospitality industry and does business as “Propel.”

4.3 LinkBC
http://linkbc.ca

LinkBC, the tourism and hospitality education network supports and connects 20 post-secondary tourism and hospitality programs throughout the province and the Yukon. Drawing on the diversity and strength of this education network, LinkBC manages four major initiatives including:

- An industry/education information hub, Tourism Online Resource Centre (TORC)
- Student/Industry Events, connecting industry to students and graduates
- Strengthening the Tourism Learning System (TLS)
- Promoting BC as an International Tourism/Hospitality Learning Destination
5.0 RELATED EDUCATION & TRAINING

5.1 Secondary School Programs

Secondary school courses, e.g. Tourism 11 and Tourism 12 now have nationally recognized *emerit* skill standards embedded in their curriculum. These high school courses introduce students to the plethora of careers available in the tourism/hospitality industry.

5.2 Certificate & Diploma Programs

Tourism & hospitality programs are offered at most BC public colleges and many private colleges as well as at several universities. Certificate and diploma programs prepare students for a broad range of front line and supervisory positions in the tourism and hospitality industry. In BC these programs benefit from common core curriculum handbooks, developed cooperatively, endorsed by industry and distributed through the LinkBC network.

5.3 Degree Programs

Four year degree programs are offered at several public colleges and universities in BC. Degree programs prepare students for management careers in tourism and hospitality. In BC these programs benefit from block transfer agreements within the tourism learning system diploma programs. Degree programs include upper level content, common themes, and approaches developed cooperatively by institutions. This information is included in provincial handbooks, distributed through the LinkBC network.

5.4 Post Graduate Programs

Masters programs specializing in tourism and hospitality are now available in BC for those who wish to pursue leadership and policy development positions, and who wish to conduct industry relevant research.

For a detailed summary of educational options, please consult resources available through go2 at [http://www.go2hr.ca/TrainingEducation/tabid/106/Default.aspx](http://www.go2hr.ca/TrainingEducation/tabid/106/Default.aspx)
6.0 ESSENTIAL SKILLS CURRICULUM AND RESOURCES

Almost from the beginning of essential skills initiatives in Canada, the tourism and hospitality industry embraced the concept of transferable, foundational skills.

Nine Essential Skills include:
http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/Understanding_ES_e.shtml

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Text</th>
<th>Writing</th>
<th>Continuous Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Document Use</td>
<td>Oral Communication</td>
<td>Thinking Skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td>Work with Others</td>
<td>Computer Use Skills</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These skills are used in nearly every occupation and throughout daily life in different ways and at different levels of complexity.

6.1 Emerit Skills Training for Tourism
http://www.emerit.ca

Emerit, available through CTHRC, offers a wide range of standards-based training for the tourism industry. Emerit training products and programs provide essential skills training for approximately 50 job classifications in the hospitality and tourism industry. National occupational standards representing “the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to be considered competent” in these occupations are clearly embedded and highlighted in all training curriculum.

6.2 Emerit Training Resources
http://www.emerit.ca

Emerit provides a wide range of tourism/hospitality resources including: national occupational standards, workbooks and trainer’s guides, on-line training and assessment tools used for professional certification.

6.3 Skills Education and Training for Immigrants
http://www.itsessential.ca

CTHRC partnered with Canadian Language Benchmarks to develop “a methodology for benchmarking the language skills of select tourism sector occupations, based on essential skills profiles and national occupational standards. Outcomes of this project included a raised awareness within the tourism sector about the importance of language proficiency requirements inherent in numerous occupations. This is a key factor in the hospitality sector, with an increasing percentage of workers in many businesses being newcomers to Canada.
6.4 Essential Skills for Aboriginal Peoples

www.towes.com

Through the Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement (AHRDA), essential skills’ training is seen as an alternative to academic credentials. For this reason, many AHRDA’s, such as the First Nation’s Employment Services (FNES), encourage clients to write the Test of Workplace Essential Skills (TOWES) to determine the level of their essential skills, specifically reading, document use and numeracy. TOWES can be used to match the client’s skill level with appropriate occupations and training. Training opportunities are limited by the number of institutions willing to accept the TOWES results in lieu of other standardized testing. This information is relevant as more First Nations communities begin to include Aboriginal tourism/hospitality initiatives in their economic plans.

6.5 Essential Skills for People with Disabilities

Considering the Hospitality Careers program established by VCC’s Community and Career Education (CACE) department can make a link to this essential skills assessment project. This full-time program is designed to introduce students with cognitive disabilities to employment opportunities in the hospitality industry. CACE offers basic skill training while establishing customer relation skills and effective employee behaviours necessary for entry-level workers. Employment options for workers with cognitive disabilities include positions within: housekeeping, guest-services, and in banquet & convention services. Much of the CACE curriculum was designed using emerit’s national occupational standards and HRSDC essential skills profiles.

7.0 BC PERSPECTIVES

7.1 Essential Skills for HM Programs: Large Urban Areas – VCC

Graduates of BC hospitality management programs are expected to be proficient with workplace essential skills. The Ministry of Advanced Education’s standardized Hospitality Management Core Curriculum Handbook (2007) declares that graduates from BC diploma programs in hospitality management have completed a range of basic management course work. Further, those students have participated in workplace internships or practica that has enabled them to fine tune their communication skills. Job specific competencies allow students to work in team-oriented environments and to employ problem-solving skills to remedy everyday customer service issues. Graduates of diploma programs are familiar with technology common to industry and are able to produce effective presentations and marketing materials required to promote ideas, and services relevant to the hospitality industry. Graduates of diploma programs are skilled providers of customer service.
Course curriculum provides broad-based skills, such as, business communications and technical writing that are transferable across industry and that can be applied when employed in a diverse range of hospitality occupations.

Like others in the province, the Hospitality Management Diploma and Degree program at VCC view essential skills to be embedded throughout their programs. Trained assessors have analyzed course handouts and have observed instruction in order to determine language and numeracy benchmarks etc. Essential skill competencies are demonstrated through project work, presentations and workplace simulations. Currently, instructional designers are establishing e-portfolio curriculum to demonstrate job readiness and are considering the adoption of an essential skills framework to guide portfolio development.

7.2 Essential Skills for HM Programs: Small Rural Communities – COTR

Currently ‘for credit’ hospitality programs are not offered in the East or Central Kootenay regions. The current focus of credit programs is on tourism and recreation. Aboriginal Tourism training programs are currently non-existent but a number of other regions in the province are working on different types of Aboriginal program offerings. Aboriginal tourism remains a developing part of the region’s tourism economy, e.g. St. Eugene’s Mission.

COTR currently offers a Continuing Education Certificate in Food & Beverage Management. This 80-hour course consists of four modules that are delivered online. It was developed using national standards and emerit Food & Beverage Manager Workbooks.

As stated in the go2 report entitled: Tourism Kootenay Rockies HR Strategy (2007) the Kootenay region is facing a shortage of workers at all levels in the tourism and hospitality industry. The rural economy is strong and this makes it difficult for hospitality operators to compete for employees. Currently a high school graduate can find work in the Elk Valley mines for up to $40.00 per hour as opposed to in the hospitality industry for $12.00 per hour. As a result, hospitality operators are more concerned with finding employees regardless of their skill level.

Training and developing essential skills within the existing workforce is usually not a priority. The cost of training and the fact that employers are understaffed makes giving employees time off for training problematic. Accessing training is also problematic due to the large geographic area of the Kootenays and the remoteness of some tourism and hospitality products. Poor winter driving conditions are also an obstacle to accessing training on a COTR campus.

Many hospitality workers cannot afford to leave their jobs to complete full time hospitality diploma or degree programs. The current industry practice of promoting front line workers to supervisory and/or to management position without formal training is a deterrent.
The Kootenay Region is comprised of independent resort/restaurants and hotels and as a result, many lack the formal training programs often available in larger chains. Employers need access to programs that are flexible, that are available locally and/or that are available online.

The region’s hospitality employers are not as familiar as they should be with the resources available to them through go2 or emerit. Many do not know that national tourism occupational standards exist or that there are formalized essential skills resources related to their industry. Greater recognition of these programs, and the certification and resources they provide is needed.

COTR currently has an agreement with Mount Baker and Selkirk High Schools that gives students who complete Tourism 11 and 12 credits towards COTR’s Introduction to Tourism class. Also, those same students can get 3-credits for the work experience terms they complete in High School. This gives students entering COTR 6 credits towards their diploma. Provincial industry career-awareness programs that target high school students like “Move on Up” and the Tourism Career Awareness Program (TCAP) are not embraced in the Kootenays. These programs need to be strengthened in the Kootenay area and students need to be introduced to the benefits of tourism and hospitality careers.

See Section 9.0: A SYNOPSIS OF PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

7.3 Essential Skills for HM Programs: Mid-size Interior (TRU)

Kamloops is a city of approximately 85,000 people, situated at the confluence of the North and South Thompson Rivers in the interior of BC. Historically a transportation hub, the Kamloops economy is built upon primary industries such as forestry, mining and agriculture. While these primary industries are still an important part of the economy, manufacturing, tourism and high-tech businesses are making their presence felt in the business mix of the region.

Tourism is emerging as an important employer, with 9% of the labour force employed in the hospitality sector alone. Large players in the region include Sun Peaks Resort, Rocky Mountaineer Vacations and Tobiano Resort to name a few. Kamloops is the adventure and recreation capital of the BC Interior, with over 200 lakes within a 60km radius of the city, 13 championship golf courses, countless mountain biking and hiking trails and many other outdoor attractions. Kamloops owns the moniker “Tournament Capital of Canada” with tournament-quality indoor and outdoor sports facilities of every kind. The city is at the crossroads of the Trans Canada Highway and the Yellowhead Highway, and hosts many bus tour companies as they stop for the evening between the Rocky Mountains and Vancouver. High quality, unique meeting and conference facilities allow the hosting of many business functions throughout the year. In short, for a small city, Kamloops has an amazing tourism infrastructure requiring a large number of tourism industry employees.

The tourism industry competes with many other sectors for a shrinking pool of labour. In particular, the mining industry and the oil industry are attracting entry-level workers with
starting wages between $20 and $40 per hour. Tourism employers are finding it necessary to actively market their positions in order to attract labour. Marketing strategies include highlighting the values of lifestyle, flexibility, community, human scale and teamwork, and offering benefits such as ski and golf passes, transportation, health benefits, reciprocal resort passes, discounts and the like. Employers indicate that, if money is the prime motivator, tourism jobs are not front-and-centre in the minds of perspective employees.

Thompson Rivers University is located in the heart of Kamloops. Originally opened as Cariboo College in 1970, becoming University College of the Cariboo in 1989, and finally Thompson Rivers University in 2004, TRU has a 20 year history of providing tourism and hospitality education. The School of Tourism at TRU currently offers a Bachelor of Tourism Management with 3 major options (tourism management, adventure studies, entrepreneurship) and 3 minor options (adventure studies, entrepreneurship, international adventure in tourism development minor). Five 2-year diploma programs (events and conventions, resort and hotel management, sport event management, adventure guide and events and conventions management) are designed to ladder into the BTM degree program. Certificate programs range from culinary arts and retail meat processing to aboriginal tourism and the Canadian mountain and ski guide certificate. In 2007 the School of Tourism offered its first online program with the event management certificate (EMC online).

Many TRU tourism students are being recruited by non-tourism businesses that value the combination of business, service and communication skills of program graduates. TRU students in general are being recruited by employers promising them flexible work schedules that will allow them to complete their studies while working, though over an extended period of time. Other employers are offering top wages to students, saying that they will train them in-house and not require them to complete their university education at all. In short, TRU is competing for students with a very active and aggressive labour market. Students who begin programs may end up in any of a number of scenarios that lead them either away from their studies or away from the tourism workforce.

Progressive employers are partnering with high schools, universities and agencies such as Service Canada to find long-term and seasonal employees. The BC government’s new foreign worker program is being successfully utilized by a number of the larger tourism employers in the Kamloops area.

Many tourism employers find training to be a challenge. Large employers generally have in-house training programs, and seasonal employers have the advantage of training a number of new employees at the same time. Many employers use a combination of in-house training and industry certification, such as SuperHost, Serving it Right and Food Safe certifications. Smaller employers, or larger employers with mid-season hires, struggle to find time for training as they are often understaffed, given the current labour market, and working to capacity. The ability to part with an employee or group of employees even for half a day is problematic.
Employers indicate that electronically-based training is a valuable tool for them, allowing for flexible delivery in shorter units of time. Electronic training is best when paired with team-building activities so that employees aren’t operating in isolation. Online training, for example, is best utilized in technical or specific training circumstances, or for continuous improvement, after team and social networks have been established. Some employers are offering a menu of training to their employees, and checklists monitor when employees have completed all of the items on the menu. The menu option allows some flexibility in the timing of training, and the checklist makes the training tangible. Employers agree that mentors and coaches are a necessity in today’s workplace. Mentors must be identified, encouraged and, in some cases, trained in order to unlock their full potential. Mentoring programs can be formal or organic, but all agree that key people in key positions can make or break the workplace.

While many employers are well acquainted with the aforementioned standard industry certifications, such as SuperHost, many are unaware of other options and resources available to support them in their training efforts. Employers hope that essential skills training will be taken care of within the high school curriculum and feel that high school graduates should be armed with the 9 essential skills.

Employers point to other skills that may be lacking in both potential and experienced employees. These relate to the ability to communicate in a professional manner, understand workplace protocols, demonstrate a commitment to work, to prioritize information, and show loyalty and commitment to their employer. The prevailing sense of employers is that employees feel that there are so many options available to them that they can move easily between employers when the going gets tough. There are a number of labels given to young workers (generation Y, millennials, nexus generation), and there is a palpable generation gap in the workplace, with employers struggling to relate to, motivate, and provide meaningful employment to this new breed of employee.

See Section 9.0: A SYNOPSIS OF PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

8.0 SKILL GAPS AND TRAINING NEEDS

8.1 Our Suggested Approach

Short, entry and mid-level hospitality courses that have national standards and tourism essential skills embedded are required. These will be affordable initiatives for industry workers who wish to access hospitality training. National certification that counts for credits towards diploma and/or degree programs may enhance a commitment to life long learning.

Online hospitality courses that accommodate rural workers in the Kootenays would compliment COTR’s plan to develop additional online hospitality courses within a national standards and essential skills framework. Online course delivery should include an assigned instructor and discussion forums that stimulate learning and provide
interactive practical experiences. Hospitality is a people business and offering training without a “human touch” may alienate learners.

COTR’s Contract Training offers hospitality training that is available on campus or at the worksite. This provides flexible delivery and client specific curriculum. Essential skills and national standards are the core focus of this training.

COTR is in the process of dividing the Tourism Management program into modules that can be delivered in shorter timeframes. For example, COTR could deliver the program in 7.5-hour modules. Upon completion of six modules, a student would be eligible for credits relevant to a 45-hour course.

Any government training initiatives would be welcomed by this areas’ hospitality industry and would assist organizations who may not have a training oriented culture.

Frontline tourism and hospitality workers need to be familiar with local area attractions, facilities and events. Hospitality workers are the point of contact with the customer; workers need to be able to respond to client questions. Responding to clients is an essential skill for a tourism and/or hospitality worker. These hospitality “Ambassador” training programs can be developed and delivered through the Continuing Education department in conjunction with Regional Destination Marketing Organizations.

This area does not have a Kootenay specific hospitality industry recognition program. Implementing a Hospitality Awards night to recognize organizations that embrace national standards and/or essential skills can be used to promote higher training standards. Public recognition of these organizations may also generate awareness and respect for the hospitality industry. This may also result in a competitive advantage for those organizations offering essential skills and national standards training.

Employers also need training in employee retention strategies and in appreciation and motivational initiatives that retain staff long enough for them to justify and realize the benefits of essential skills training.

8.2 Skill Gaps in the Food & Beverage Sector

Interviews with representatives of the Food & Beverage Sector identified the need for skilled employees as their most significant issue. When asked what F&B employers look for in a new employee, one Director of Training replied: “A warm body!” This sentiment is echoed throughout service industries. A recent Ipsos-Reid poll commissioned by the Victoria Times Colonist and by CHEK-TV confirms this finding.

http://www.canada.com/victoriatimescolonist/news/story.html?id=444b48b3-937b-4f5a-b3c4-546653bcba10

For this reason, some HR departments tend to focus training on management positions, thinking that if a manager has strong skills, he or she can adequately model/mentor and train employees for junior positions. Other approaches include designating a staff trainer,
for example, a senior server, to guide new employees through a structured orientation program. These orientation programs focus mainly on operations, with essential skills either implied or expected.

When pressed to identify expected qualities of an “ideal hire” representatives agreed that attitude and personality were key qualities. When asked what these qualities looked like, they generally agreed that problem solving, e.g. guest recovery, oral communication and working with others were the most important essential skills for F&B servers. Again, managers and staff trainers are expected to model these skills. If training manuals exist, employees are guided toward them.

8.3 Training Needs in the Food & Beverage Sector

- Greater awareness of the findings from essential skills research projects and the place core competencies fill in job training
- Access to essential skills training at a broad level, i.e. a focus on transferable skills
- Access to essential skills training for managers who are required to model/mentor junior staff
- Essential skills demonstrable at interview stage

8.4 Skill Gaps in Accommodation Sector

Three urban hotels included in this research project represented middle to high-end venues in the Accommodation Sector. It is noteworthy, that “brand” is an important consideration, in hiring and training operations.

For example, at the Marriott Pinnacle, Hospitality Management Diploma graduates fill all accommodation positions, excluding perhaps housekeeping. The Marriott is considered a high-end hotel that attracts well-qualified employees. As the perception of brand quality decreases, so too will hiring criteria.

Essential skills awareness appears higher in the Accommodation Sector than in the Food & Beverage sector. Many of the larger hotels use emerit and/or reference CTHRC occupational standards in their training process. If employees are lacking workplace essential skills, trainers and/or managers refer them to training manuals, to job descriptions and/or to workshops – not necessarily relating to essential skills, but indeed refreshing operational procedures.

As in the F&B sector, employers in the Accommodation sector look for personality, attitude and good people skills in their recruits. While emerit training defines and quantifies these terms, they are mostly assessed by an “I know it when I see it” approach. When asked what these qualities looked like, our interviewees agreed that thinking skills, oral communication and working with others were most relevant. As well, they indicated that strong reading skills were required to stay current with hotel procedures.
8.5 Training Needs in Accommodation Sector

- Greater awareness of the findings of essential skills research projects and the place core competencies fill in job training
- Access to essential skills training, i.e. focus on transferable skills
- Access to essential skills training for managers who are required to model/mentor junior staff
- Essential skills demonstrable at interview stage
- Reading skills improvements
9.0 A SYNOPSIS OF PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

This section captures a synopsis of participant recommendations as teased out of their respective reports and interview findings. Some recommendations may be repeated indicating that more than one participating institution reflected that particular point of view.

i. Participating institutions expressed interest in continued collaboration around this essential skills initiative.

ii. Participating partners should invite college and industry representatives to form a Program Advisory Committee.

iii. LinkBC should drive an essential skills awareness program.

iv. Participating institutions should assess essential skill levels required by their students, i.e. for specific hospitality tourism curriculum.

v. Assessment centres should identify skill gaps between student abilities and essential skills/national occupational standards.

vi. LinkBC should host essential skills instruction seminars for faculty and administrators.

vii. LinkBC should develop and warehouse authentic workplace training materials and scenarios related to essential skills/national occupational standards.

viii. Participating institutions should introduce essential skills for Program Advisory Committee endorsement.

ix. LinkBC should develop an essential skills awareness campaign targeting accommodation and F&B workplaces.

x. Participating institutions should invite curriculum designers to integrate emerit occupational standards into their programs.

xi. Participating institutions should provide access to hospitality management diploma and degree students to essential skills training.

xii. LinkBC should drive an employer awareness campaign that introduces employers to existing programs and products.

xiii. LinkBC should provide access to employers, workers and students through distributed learning formats.

xiv. LinkBC should look at the flow of essential skill training in order to ensure that graduates at each level have obtained the skills to the appropriate degree of sophistication, i.e. specifying the level of skill required, for example, at the diploma level as opposed to the degree level.

xv. As many employers, particularly small-business employers, are operating in a cash-thin environment, Link BC might guide employers to specific training that they can do with their own employees.

xvi. LinkBC should convene an advisory panel to work with high schools, colleges and universities, ensuring that essential skills training flows through the curriculum at various educational levels.
10.0 PHASE I RECOMMENDATION

Tourism workplace essential skills, provides a common language for training for those in adult basic education, career programs, and the workplace. By teaching foundation skills specific to occupations at all levels of the career path, educators and employers can smooth the transition from theory to practice, from school to the workplace, resulting in employees who are more confident, more safety conscious, more productive and better able to communicate within a team-oriented environments.

A diverse and varied level of awareness exists within the tourism/hospitality industry. Some interview participants were very aware and actively utilizing tourism/hospitality college programs, emerit, Ready-to-Work and/or other CTHRC resources and products as part of their internal HR development strategy; other interview participants were totally unaware of the resources available. Further, many employers, both those who were and those who were not aware, do not necessarily understand the link between essential skills, job performance and/or the notion emphasized by go2 findings, i.e. that recruitment, retention and training need to be embraced in an environment where labour shortages are prevalent.

In view of these findings, VCC, COTR and TRU recommend:

LinkBC facilitates the continued collaboration of the aforementioned participating institutions as they partner with the BC tourism/hospitality industry to further essential skills awareness and workplace training programs as offered by CTHRC, emerit, go2 and other relevant provincial and federal resources that have HR development as their mandate and that enable the tourism/hospitality industry to access potential labour markets, such as: workers with disabilities, Aboriginal youth, newcomers to Canada, and other marginalized individuals – as enabled by the development, delivery and/or accessibility of programs such as, Ready-to-Work, Essential Skills for Newcomers and other similar programs or products.
Research findings and recommendations anticipate a Pilot Project/Phase II that might involve a sample population from the diverse sectors previously identified. As implemented in Phase I, consideration will be given to participants in small/rural, mid-size interior and large urban communities. Hospitality/tourism employees and employers, may be provided with access to one or more resources, programs and/or products, such as, Ready-to-Work, Essential Skills for Newcomers, emerit etc. in order to promote and raise industry awareness of these existing resources.

Further, participating institutions: VCC, COTR and TRU as supported by LinkBC, will administer a pre/post survey to determine benchmarks that might inform ongoing and/or future use of these valuable programs. The intent is to establish benchmarks that illustrate the impact of an essential skills program.

In anticipation of funding, the aforementioned programs and products will be provided without charge to target populations through a collaborative partnership between go2, Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council, LinkBC and participating institutions: VCC, COTR, TRU and the Ministry of Advanced Education for a defined period of time.

Target groups will include: people with disabilities, Aboriginal youth, newcomers to Canada and other groups that might otherwise be disadvantaged and denied access to more traditional educational programs.

It is anticipated that by embedding essential skills training within the tourism/hospitality industry that the value and impact of essential skills programs will establish a recruiting, retention and training strategy that will become an industry norm and that when the return on investment is transparent, employers and other institutions will continue to invest in these programs.

A variety of methods and strategies will be employed to deliver training in various formats, e.g. tele training, face/face workshops, online modules, self-directed study workbooks etc. and strategies may include a marketing campaign, a train/trainer program, and other approaches that include adult education and ESL programs.
References

Canadian Language Benchmarks/Essential Skills in the Workplace
http://www.itsessential.ca/itsessential/display_page.asp?page_id=1

Canadian Language Benchmarks
http://www.language.ca/

Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council
http://www.cthrc.ca/

Emerit
http://www.emerit.ca/eng/page.aspx?_id=training_tools.htm

Essential Skills
http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/home_e.shtml

Essential Skills for Aboriginal People

Essential Skills in Canadian Workplaces

Essential Skills in Canadian Workplaces

go2: Recruit, Train, Retain
http://www.go2hr.ca/Portals/0/reports/RecrRetTrain.pdf

Hospitality Management Diploma Core Curriculum Handbook
http://www.linkbc.ca/main/?hospmgmt&PHPSESSID=6332b3df2f6df021cfe5ac4af5b8a23

Peter Drucker Award: BC Tourism Learning System
http://www.innovation-award.ca/story100d.html?Page=story.html&IdeabookID=150

http://www.go2hr.ca/Portals/0/reports/KRHRStrategyfinal.pdf

Meeting the Challenge: Essential Skills (CTHRC)

Ready-to-Work Program (CTHRC)
http://www.cthrc.ca/eng/page.aspx?_id=ready_to_work.htm
## Appendix A

**Workplace Essential Skills Initiative Phase I**  
**Industry Partner Interviews**  
**Company Information**

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With less than high school graduation?  

With only high school graduation?  

With a college diploma?  

With a four-year degree?  

With an advanced degree?  

With Certificate of Apprenticeship  
Or Inter-Provincial Standard Endorsement (Red Seal)?  

With E-Merit Credentials?  

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**BC Hospitality Workplace Essential Skills Project**  
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Interview Questions

1. When hiring new employees, what attributes do you look for most?

2. Does the phrase “Essential Skills” mean anything to you? If yes, what do you know about them?

3. After looking at the list of 9 Essential Skills, which of the skills do you consider to be most important for a successful server, front desk, or entry-level employee? (Name 3)

4. Would you say that most applicants have the above 3 skills?

5. Would you say that most of your employees have the above 3 skills?

6. Of the 9 Essential Skills, which ones would you consider to be the most lacking in potential employees?

7. What type of in-house training do you do?

8. To your knowledge, what training is available for Front Desk Clerks or other positions?

9. From your perspective, what actions or strategies would best address the skill gaps and training needs of future employees?
Appendix B

Lower Mainland – Metro Vancouver

Boston Pizza
Anna Bedard, Director Training and Leadership

Coast Hotels and Resorts
Craig Norris-Jones, Regional Manager BC

Marriott Vancouver Pinnacle
Mike Truscott, Director Human Resources

The Listel Hotel
Andrea Crosley, Rooms Division Manager

Red Robin Restaurants of Canada Ltd.
Jennifer Fong, Human Resources Manager

Kootenays – Cranbrook

Copper Point Golf Club, Windermere
Brain Schael, General Manager

Heidi’s Restaurant and Catering
Heidi Romich, Owner

Radium Hot Springs Lodge
Patricia Kilback, General Manager

St Eugene Golf Resort Casino
Nicola Kaufman, Human Resources Manager

Interior BC – Kamloops

British Columbia Wild Park
John Stark, Business Development Manager

Coast Hotel and Resorts
Jaimie Drew, General Manager

Delta Sun Peaks Resort
Joel Rivers, Director People Development

Sun Peaks Resort
Jennifer Crawford, Personnel Coordinator

Sun Rivers Golf Resort Community
Ian Henderson, General Manager