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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to the 2006 Census, the retail grocery industry in B.C. employs 53,710 British Columbians, many of whom have a high school education or less. This study sheds light on the industry by drawing a comprehensive statistical profile of trends in sales, consumer expenditures and, most importantly, the demographics, educational attainment and earnings of its workforce. It is the people who work in this industry, the essential skills that are important to their jobs, and the training they receive through the industry that is the focus of this study.

This report draws a broad picture of the state of workplace essential skills training across the province in the grocery retail sector, and presents some preliminary findings regarding specific essential skills gaps for six grocery occupations. The resulting picture is intended to inform Phase II of the Ministry of Advanced Education’s Workplace Essential Skills Initiative, which will consider proposals for the creation of sector-specific essential skills training tools, resources, service delivery and assessments.

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. to profile the grocery retail sector, including a demographic overview of key occupations and employee profiles, including a summary of training needs and key employers;
2. to identify existing sector-specific workplace essential skills curriculum, resources, skill gaps and training needs;
3. to recommend a strategy to address the needs of particular occupations within the grocery retail sector that would most benefit from essential skills training; and
4. to propose a pilot project with a business / industry partner that reflects the findings of this study.

Research Approach and Issues

The study relies on three main sources of information: industry statistics from Statistics Canada; interviews with owners and managers of eight grocery organizations in B.C.; and the results of a web-based employee survey. Securing the participation of grocery stores proved to be challenging within the two-month timeframe of the study. While input was received from a range of organizations, from national chains to one-store independents, the study did not obtain input from the three largest chains in B.C. and representation of B.C.’s northern region is relatively weak. For this reason, and others covered in the Issues section of Chapter 1, the essential skills findings in this report should be considered preliminary.

Industry Profile

Chapter 2 of this report presents the richest statistical profile of the B.C. grocery retail industry available. Accounting for 17.5 percent of the province’s 2007 total retail sales, the grocery industry is the largest single trade group in the province’s retail sector. Although supermarket sales are higher per capita in B.C. than elsewhere in Canada, the rate of growth has been slowing over the period 1999 to 2007 and the grocery sector has become increasingly competitive.

The industry employs over 50,000 people in B.C.; over half of them female (57%) and over one-third under the age of 25. This is a workforce with little formal education; 23 percent have not completed high school and nationally the proportion is higher (30%). Overall, 46 percent of employees in the provincial industry are working part-time, or less than 30 hours a week.
Training and Skill Gaps
This study revealed that the human resource challenges for the B.C. grocery retail sector are very similar to those identified by the Canadian Food Industry Council (CFIC) in a national study conducted in 2004. B.C. grocers are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain workers. In some cases, interviewees attributed the difficulty with recruitment and retention to wage levels in the grocery retail industry and the fact that young employees can earn much higher wages in other industries. Others pointed to poor availability of higher level training programs for skilled positions, such as meat cutters and bakers.

The grocery retail industry operates in a fast-paced, competitive environment. It is often not practical to send employees off-site for training. Various forms of on-the-job training, ranging from fairly structured and formal to informal are the standard for this industry. Larger chains are more likely to have formal, on-the-job training programs delivered by designated trainers who have received training on how to train. The grocery retail sector focuses on providing job-specific skills and delivering mandatory training, such as Workers Compensation Board (WCB) training and Food Safe training.

In terms of essential skills, Oral Communication consistently emerged as the skill that is relevant to every grocery retail occupation and is widely considered the most valuable skill for the industry. This is not surprising because the ability to communicate orally is a cornerstone of good customer service. The retail grocery industry is very customer-service oriented and in an era of increasing industry competition, the ability to interact positively with customers, and to understand and meet their needs in an engaging way, is critical to business success.

The Occupation-Specific Findings section of Chapter 3 provides a detailed profile of each of the six retail grocery occupations that are the focus of this study: supervisor, meat cutter, baker, sales clerk, cashier and clerk. Profiles cover the most important essential skills as identified by interviewees, and duties, education requirements, current training practices, and essential skill gaps. For instance, the findings identify an essential skill gap for supervisors in the area of Level Three oral communication skills, such as conflict resolution. Supervisors in this industry come from the ranks and have generally had little formal training in how to manage what is an increasingly diverse and multi-cultural workforce.

Recommendations
The final chapter of this report lays out recommendations for a pilot project that would begin by validating and enhancing the preliminary results from this study. This would be an important pre-requisite to the development of an effective skills enhancement strategy. Of critical importance to this next step is the formal involvement of a partner, such as the Canadian Food Industry Council, which brings a great depth of knowledge of both the industry and its workforce to the table. The proposed approach to the development of a training program, outlined in Chapter 4, is sensitive to the industry’s traditions and constraints. It harnesses a process that is already underway throughout the sector – on-the-job-training – and lends structure to that process. While the job-specific part of the proposed training model pertains to an employee’s current position, the essential skills focus will provide these employees with a skill set they will have throughout their careers, ultimately enriching their own lives and benefiting the B.C. economy.
Acknowledgements
This study was funded by a grant from the B.C. Ministry of Advanced Education. Camosun College extends sincere thanks to everyone who contributed to this report. During this study it became very clear that, from the front line to head office, there is very little unallocated time in a typical working day in the grocery industry. Yet several grocery organizations and their employees found time, on relatively short notice, to share their valuable experiences with us and to make this research possible. Thank you. Our appreciation is also extended to Cheryl Paradowski of the Canadian Food Industry Council, who shared her considerable expertise at various points along the way. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the support of Wendy Magahay of the Ministry of Advanced Education for her guidance at critical junctures in the study.
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1. INTRODUCTION
This report presents the results of a study of essential skills training and skill gaps in the grocery retail sector of British Columbia. Supermarkets are the largest single trade group in B.C.'s retail sector, accounting for 18 percent of the province’s total 2007 retail sales. The food retail sector has traditionally been a strong creator of employment opportunities for a broad range of employees, including those with entry-level skills and little formal education.

The study, conducted in May and June of 2008, draws a broad picture of the state of workplace essential skills training across the province in the grocery retail sector, and identifies specific essential skill gaps. The resulting picture is intended to inform Phase II of the Ministry of Advanced Education’s Workplace Essential Skills Initiative, which will consider proposals for the creation of sector-specific essential skills training tools, resources, service delivery and assessments.

Data for this study have been gathered through discussions with industry associations and educational institutions, interviews with managers of grocery stores and through an employee survey. Detailed interviews were conducted with managers of eight grocery organizations, ranging in size from national chains with more than 20 B.C. stores, to independents with one store location. The employer interviews were complemented with information collected directly from employees of participating stores through a web-based survey. The survey asked employees for information about what essential skills, as identified by Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) or the Canadian Food Industry Council (CFIC), were most important to them in relation to performing their job.

1.1 Study Objectives
The specific objectives of this research study are:

1. to profile the grocery retail sector, including a demographic overview of key occupations and employee profiles, including a summary of training needs and key employers;
2. to identify existing sector-specific workplace essential skills curriculum, resources, skill gaps and training needs;
3. to recommend a strategy to address the needs of particular occupations within the grocery retail sector that would most benefit from essential skills training; and
4. to propose a pilot project with a business / industry partner that reflects the findings of this study.

1.2 Background
Essential skills are defined by HRSDC as the skills needed for work, learning and life. They are foundational skills that enable people to evolve and adapt to their jobs. They are not the technical skills required to perform a particular function, but rather the enabling skills that are necessary in all occupations and that allow people to succeed in the workplace. The degree of complexity required in each essential skill area varies across occupations.

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1 The Canadian Food Industry Council (CFIC) is the nationally recognized sectoral council that exists to support a collective response to the food retail/wholesale industry's human resource challenges.
Table 1 lists the nine essential skills that have been identified and validated by the Government of Canada, along with examples of how each skill is used in a typical grocery workplace.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Skill</th>
<th>Typical Applications</th>
<th>Grocery Workplace Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Reading materials in the form of sentences or paragraphs | • Scan for information  
• Skim for overall meaning  
• Read a full text to understand, learn, critique or evaluate  
• Integrate and synthesize information from multiple sources or from complex and lengthy texts | A cashier scans the weekly grocery flyer to identify what is on sale.  
A baker reads cake orders to identify what type and size of cake is required, the date and time required by, and specifics about decorations. |
| **Document Use** |                      |                          |
| Tasks that involve a variety of information displays in which words, numbers, symbols and other visual characteristics (e.g., lines, colours or shapes) are given meaning by their spatial arrangement | • Read signs, labels or lists  
• Interpret information on graphs or charts  
• Enter information on forms  
• Read or create schematic drawings  
• Read or create assembly drawings | A floral clerk reviews weekly flyers and featured sales items lists to verify that prices displayed on cash register match list prices.  
A cashier completes a rain check form. |
| **Numeracy**    |                      |                          |
| Using numbers and thinking in quantitative terms to complete tasks | • Numerical estimation  
• Numerical calculation  
• Money math  
• Scheduling or budgeting and accounting math  
• Measurement and calculation math  
• Data analysis math | A baker alters the amount of ingredients required when making a double batch of cookies. |
| **Writing**     |                      |                          |
| Writing text and writing in documents, such as filling in forms, and non-paper-based writing such as typing on the computer | • Organize, record or document  
• Inform or persuade  
• Request information or justify a request  
• Present an analysis or a comparison | A cake decorator writes orders on order forms, including the customer’s name and contact information, pick-up time, and cake description. |
| **Oral Communication** |                   |                          |
| Using speech to give and exchange thoughts and information | • Greet people or take messages  
• Reassure, comfort or persuade  
• Seek or obtain information  
• Resolve conflicts  
• Facilitate or lead a group | A cashier talks to co-workers to coordinate break schedules.  
A baker calls customers with special orders to clarify their needs. |
| **Working with Others** |                  |                          |
| Employees working with others to carry out their tasks | • Work independently  
• Work jointly with a partner or helper  
• Work as a member of a team  
• Participate in supervisory or leadership activities | A baker assigns routine tasks to other workers.  
An experienced clerk works with a new employee to show how to re-stock shelves. |
| **Thinking**    |                      |                          |
| The process of evaluating ideas or information to reach a rational decision | • Problem solving  
• Decision making  
• Critical thinking  
• Job task planning and organizing  
• Significant use of memory  
• Finding information | A cake decorator corrects improperly or poorly decorated cakes by carefully scraping off the icing and re-masking and re-applying the cake decoration. |
HRSDC has conducted extensive research on how essential skills are used in the workplace. Through interviews with workers, managers, practitioners and leading researchers, HRSDC has developed essential skills profiles for approximately 250 occupations, including all occupations requiring a high school diploma or less. The CFIC has also developed profiles for four grocery occupations: meat cutter, floral clerk, baker and cake decorator. Essential skills profiles are a rich source of information regarding how each of the nine essential skills is used in a workplace setting. The profiles are a key input to this study because they identify the particular subset of the nine essential skills that are considered to be the most important to each occupation, and also the level at which those skills must be performed.

The occupations listed in Table 2 were identified early in the study as common to most grocery retail environments. The Skill Level in Table 2 refers to the amount and type of education and training typically required to work in the occupation. Jobs in Skill Levels C and D are generally achievable with on-the-job experience, whereas jobs in Skill Level B are generally not possible without completion of additional formal education. Table 2 shows that the first three occupations listed require some formal education, whereas the last three do not.

Among the last three occupations listed in Table 2 are two that have similar titles: sales clerks and clerks. Sales clerks are employees who serve customers at particular stations within the store, such as the deli, the bakery, the seafood counter or the floral department. They are expected to have relatively high levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Skill</th>
<th>Typical Applications</th>
<th>Grocery Workplace Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer Use</td>
<td>• Operate a computerized cash register</td>
<td>A cashier uses a computerized cash register and laser scanner to process a customer order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use word processing software to produce letters or memos</td>
<td>A supervisor uses a spreadsheet to manage the store schedule.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Send e-mails with attachments to multiple users</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Create and modify spreadsheets for data entry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continuous Learning</td>
<td>• As part of regular work activity</td>
<td>A supervisor takes a leadership course offered through a local college.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• From co-workers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Through training offered in the workplace</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Through off-site training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 2. Occupations in a Typical Grocery Retail Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupations</th>
<th>NOC</th>
<th>NOC Name</th>
<th>Skill Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Store Supervisors and Head Cashiers</td>
<td>6211</td>
<td>Supermarket Supervisor</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat Cutters</td>
<td>6251</td>
<td>Butchers, Meat Cutters and Fishmongers</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakers – e.g., Head Baker or Baker Apprentice (includes cake decorator)</td>
<td>6252</td>
<td>Baker</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Clerks – e.g., sales staff at seafood, meat, floral, deli, or bakery counters</td>
<td>6421</td>
<td>Retail Sales Associate</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cashiers</td>
<td>6611</td>
<td>Cashiers</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks – e.g., bag clerk, grocery clerk, order filler, price clerk, produce clerk, shelf stocker, courtesy counter worker</td>
<td>6622</td>
<td>Grocery Clerks and Store Shelf Stockers</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: NOC codes are structured as follows: Skill Type, Skill Level, Minor Group, Major Group.

Among the last three occupations listed in Table 2 are two that have similar titles: sales clerks and clerks. Sales clerks are employees who serve customers at particular stations within the store, such as the deli, the bakery, the seafood counter or the floral department. They are expected to have relatively high levels
of product knowledge and excellent customer service skills. The clerk occupation includes staff that stock shelves, bag groceries, check prices and fill orders for groceries. This occupation is not expected to have the same level of product knowledge and customer service skills as the sales clerks.

Essential skills profiles have been produced by HRSDC and/or the CFIC for each of these six occupations. Table 3 shows which essential skills have been identified in the profiles as the most important to performing the duties of each occupation. This study uses the CFIC essential skills profiles for meat cutter and baker to identify the most important essential skills for these occupations rather than the HRSDC profiles for the same occupations. The CFIC has developed profiles for retail meat cutter and baker to reflect the distinct nature of these occupations in a grocery setting. For instance, retail bakers do more par-baking and less baking from scratch than bakers in other industries. Floral clerks are included with sales clerks and the essential skills identified as important to this occupation by the CFIC are shown in addition to the HRSDC skills identified for sales clerks in general in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupations</th>
<th>NOC</th>
<th>Most Important Essential Skills</th>
<th>Profile Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Store Supervisors and Head Cashiers</td>
<td>6211</td>
<td>Oral communication, Problem Solving, Decision Making, Working with Others</td>
<td>HRSDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat Cutters – e.g., supermarket meat cutter</td>
<td>6251</td>
<td>Document use, Working with others, Oral communication</td>
<td>CFIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakers – e.g., Head Baker or Baker Apprentice and cake decorators</td>
<td>6252</td>
<td>Job task planning and organizing, Oral communication, Decision making, Reading text</td>
<td>CFIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Clerks – e.g., sales staff at seafood, meat, deli, or bakery counters</td>
<td>6421</td>
<td>Oral communication, Finding information, Working with others, Continuous learning</td>
<td>HRSDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floral Clerk</td>
<td></td>
<td>Oral communication, Document use, Decision making</td>
<td>CFIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cashiers</td>
<td>6611</td>
<td>Document use, Numeracy, Oral communication, Significant use of memory</td>
<td>HRSDC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks – e.g., bag clerk, grocery clerk, order filler, price clerk, produce clerk, shelf stocker, courtesy counter worker</td>
<td>6622</td>
<td>Oral communication, Job task planning and organizing</td>
<td>HRSDC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This study examines the training provided to grocery retail sector employees in order to support them in the particular essential skills identified as important to their occupation. It also identifies gaps in essential skills and areas where further training is recommended.

1.3 Research Approach

Information for this study comes from a variety of primary and secondary resources. This section describes the main information sources, some possible sources of bias, and some of the issues encountered during the study that may inform future work of this nature.

**Information sources**

The study relies on three main sources of information: industry statistics from Statistics Canada, interviews with managers of eight grocery organizations in B.C., and the results of a web-based employee survey. In order to profile grocery stores in terms of sales and employee demographics, custom tabulations, mainly from the 2006 Census, were requested from Statistics Canada. The data present a very rich picture of the demographics, education and work arrangements of grocery store employees in different occupations in Canada and B.C. Some of the data is provided in the body of the report and those readers who are interested in more detail will find it in the report’s appendices.

Managers from eight different grocery store organizations, ranging in size from national chains to one-store independents, were interviewed between May 15th and June 3rd, 2008. All participants will receive a copy of this report and a summary tabulation of their own employee survey results, permitting them to benchmark against the industry.

Effort was made to ensure representation from all parts of the province, recognizing that the study is intended to be provincial in scope. Grocery organizations that participated in the survey and their store location(s) within B.C. are summarized in Table 4.

**Table 4. Grocery Organizations that Participated in the Study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th># BC stores</th>
<th>Location(s) in B.C.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Westfair Foods (Real Canadian Superstore)(^1)</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Located throughout the province (e.g., Prince George, Kelowna, Kamloops, Cranbrook, Chilliwack, Victoria, Campbell River, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrifty Foods</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Throughout Vancouver Island and two locations on the Lower Mainland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Grocer</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Vancouver Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49(^{th}) Parallel</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Vancouver Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pemberton Valley</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pemberton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peninsula Co-op</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Saanich Peninsula</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delmas Co-op</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Masset, Queen Charlotte Islands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peppers Foods</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\): While the employer interview with Westfair Foods pertained to all 25 locations in B.C., employees from a subset of 15 of the 25 stores were invited to participate in the survey. This was done to coordinate with other surveying being done by Westfair Foods and to manage respondent burden. Employees who responded to the survey for this organization were from stores located on Vancouver Island, in the Interior of the province, the Lower Mainland, and the Fraser Valley.
The interviews generally lasted between one and one-and-a-half hours and included questions ranging from the educational requirements for each occupation, the types of training provided, and perceptions of skill gaps and barriers to training. Due to the extensive nature of the material covered, where possible, interviews were conducted in person. A copy of the interview questions is included in Appendix B.

All stores that participated in an interview were asked to invite their employees to complete a web-based employer survey. A website was established for this purpose: www.groceryskills.com, and a brochure was created for distribution to employees. The survey was open to responses from May 22nd to June 14th, 2008. In order to incent employees to complete the survey, a draw for three iPods from among those who completed the survey was conducted. A total of 332 completed responses were submitted to the survey, representing six different grocery organizations. No employee responses were received from two of the eight grocery organizations that participated in interviews.

Table 5. Number of Respondents by Occupation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th># of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Store Supervisors and Head Cashiers</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat Cutters</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakers (includes cake decorator)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Clerks</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cashiers</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>332</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents to the survey were distributed across occupations as shown in Table 5. Coverage of the skilled occupations, meat cutters and bakers, was relatively poor. During the last week of data collection, two updates were provided to participating stores and requests were made to particularly encourage members of these two occupations to respond. However, the number of responses remains very low. Findings from the employee survey for meat cutters and bakers should be viewed as very preliminary.

The employee survey branched into questions that are customized to each of the six occupations included in the study. Respondents from each occupation were asked a set of five customized opinion questions designed to capture information about some of the most important essential skills to that occupation, and all respondents were asked a skill Level One and a Level Two document use question, and two skill Level One and one Level Two numeracy question.2 The survey concluded with a set of basic demographic and education questions. On average, respondents took about six minutes to complete the survey. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix C.

2 The document use and numeracy questions were adapted to use grocery examples from Human Resources and Social Development Canada’s indicator tools, designed to assist employees in identifying skills that may require upgrading. The original HRSDC documents are available on the web at http://srv108.services.gc.ca/english/general/tools_apps_e.shtml

Note that the skill levels referred to here are defined by HRSDC and they describe the level at which an essential skill is used. These skill levels are different from the skill levels noted in Table 2, which refer to the amount and type of education and training typically required to work in an occupation.
The information collected through these three main channels is complemented with information from discussions with industry associations, educational institutions and grocery store workers, all of which provided helpful background.

**Issues**
Securing interviews with grocery managers was a challenging and time-consuming process. Because industry associations were unable to share their contact lists, it often took several attempts and considerable time to obtain the phone number of the correct contact. While efforts to identify and make contact with organizations began in early May, project workers were still being transferred from one contact to another in larger organizations four weeks later. Timelines could not be adjusted to accommodate these challenges because the project was due for completion at the end of June.

When contact was made with the appropriate manager of HR, store owner, or equivalent, the following are examples of some of the reasons encountered for refusing to participate:

- **Against company policy:** Two companies indicated that participating in research is against their company policy.

- **Too busy right now, but interested:** One manager of HR for a mid-sized chain was very interested in the study, but under-staffed at the time. The manager expressed apologies for not participating and indicated a strong interest in seeing a copy of the results. Another mid-sized chain had booked an interview date, but then lost a staff member and was unable to participate in the study.

- **Too busy:** One mid-sized chain indicated that they could not devote an hour to an interview now or in the future due to workload pressures.

- **Unable to get head-office approval:** An HR manager for a large grocery chain indicated that he required head office approval in order to participate. By the time initial contact was made with this manager, it was late in May. The manager indicated he would not be able to get approval from his head office in time to meet the project timelines.

- **Already being surveyed for another government project:** An HR manager for a large grocery chain was very enthusiastic about participating until he realized that his stores were involved in a survey project conducted by go2hr. It is suspected that the grocery organization is involved in research related to go2hr’s role in the management of apprenticeship training for bakers and meat cutters. All further attempts to contact the manager and clarify the perceived duplication of effort were not returned.

While the project was successful in obtaining interviews from a range of chains, co-ops and independents, coverage of some regions of the province, particularly the north, is relatively weak. Of the stores interviewed, Delmas Co-op in the Queen Charlotte Islands and Westfair Foods, with a location in Prince George, can be considered to be operating in the northern section of the province. Compensating for the limited representation from the north however, is participation of the Delmas Co-op. This Co-op, located in the remote community of Masset in the Queen Charlotte Islands, likely shares many of the same accessibility and labour market issues that a grocer operating in a northern region of the province on the

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3 Go2hr is a non-profit industry association that assists B.C.’s tourism industry to recruit, retain and train employees to support industry growth.
mainland might experience. As well, Delmas and Peninsula Co-op are both members of Federated Co-operatives Ltd. (Federated), a company that provides central support services to members, such as training and human resources. Co-operative grocery stores affiliated with Federated are found in other small and relatively remote B.C. communities such as Dawson Creek, Bella Coola, Vanderhoof, Uclulet and Tofino. As the training program used in these co-operatives is developed by Federated, it can be assumed that they are the same training programs described by Delmas and Peninsula in this study.

Unfortunately, the study was not successful in securing participation from the three largest players in the B.C. grocery retail industry: Overwaitea, Canada Safeway and IGA. Their reasons for not participating are among those listed above. It is likely that two of these organizations would have participated if the time frame for the research had been longer. The failure to secure the participation of these stores impacts the range of sophistication in the training solutions presented in this report.

Only a small number of the total grocery stores contacted actually agreed to an interview. Those who participated may not be entirely representative of the larger grocery store population in B.C. If anything, it is likely that those who are more invested in training would take a greater interest in the study and would be more inclined to participate. The picture presented of training in the grocery retail sector in B.C. in this report, therefore, may over-state the true extent of training in this sector.

Due to privacy issues, companies were not asked to provide a list of employees from which to select a random sample. Instead, companies were asked to invite all employees to participate in the web survey. This approach has the potential to introduce bias to the extent that those who responded are different from those who did not. Some grocery organizations made on-site computers available to employees for the purpose of completing the survey, while in other cases employees completed the surveys from another location, such as their home. Those who completed the survey likely have better access to computers and may well have higher computer and general literacy skills than those who did not.

While a web-based survey was identified as the most efficient means of collecting information from a broad range of employees within the timeframe of the study, there are limitations to the type of essential skill information that can be gathered in this manner. Numeracy and document use questions were relatively easily adapted to a survey format. Agreement questions were asked to tap into employees' perceptions related to essential skills in the areas of working together, problem solving, reading, oral communication, conflict resolution, continuous learning and job task planning. While a self-administered survey may not be the best tool for exploring essential skills, the findings from these agreement questions often validated feedback from interviewees, suggesting that they were effective at identifying areas where employees may be experiencing challenges.

The issues identified above mean that the results of this study should be taken as preliminary indications of essential skills training and potential gaps in the grocery retail sector. As indicated in the final section of this report, any interventions designed to address the essential skill gaps identified in this study should be preceded by a validation of key findings.
1.4 Roadmap to this Report

This report presents findings related to the overall grocery retail sector in B.C. and also for the six grocery retail occupations that are the focus of this study. “Key Findings” are summarized in boxes throughout the report.

The remainder of this report is divided into 3 main chapters.

Chapter 2: Grocery Retail Sector Profile – this chapter presents a statistical profile of the grocery retail sector in B.C. and its employees. How is the sector growing? How is the sector structured? Who are the top employers? What are the characteristics of employees in this sector, in terms of gender, age, work arrangements, and education? These questions are all addressed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3: Industry-Wide and Occupation-Specific Findings – this chapter profiles essential skills training in the industry as a whole and, for each of the six grocery retail occupations, it includes a profile of demographics, typical duties, current essential skills training, and potential essential skill gaps. The section draws on data from Statistics Canada, interviews with grocery managers and industry associations, and the employee survey. The findings for each occupation are preceded by a Key Findings box.

Chapter 4: Recommended Strategies for Addressing Skill Gaps – drawing on all of the findings in the report, Chapter 4 makes recommendations for essential skills training to address the identified skill gaps. The section concludes with a proposal for a pilot project to address the skill gaps.

There are several appendices to this report. Many data tables were acquired from Statistics Canada to support the development of the statistical profile of the grocery retail sector in B.C. Appendix A contains a series of detailed data tables that help to improve our understanding of the size, composition and health of the retail grocery sector in B.C. and Canada. The grocery manager interview questions are included as Appendix B and the employee survey is Appendix C.
2. GROCERY RETAIL SECTOR PROFILE

This chapter provides a statistical profile of the grocery retail sector and its employees in British Columbia and in Canada. The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section, titled Supermarket Sales and Food Expenditures, draws a picture of the industry's pattern of growth in recent years, its overall size in B.C. and Canada, and some strategies that are being used by grocers to stay competitive. The second section, titled Key Employers, details the structure of the industry in B.C. in terms of establishment size and lists the largest chains in the province. The third and final section in this chapter, titled Employee Profile, provides a detailed statistical picture of the employees who work in retail grocery occupations, in terms of gender, age, education, full-time or part-time status, and employment income. Selected statistics are presented in the body of this chapter and detailed tabulations are available in Appendix A.

2.1 Supermarket Sales and Food Expenditures

Canadian supermarket sales were estimated at $65.8 billion in 2007, with B.C.’s portion of the industry posting sales valued at $9.9 billion. In terms of total 2007 sales, supermarkets were the largest single trade group in B.C.’s retail sector, representing 17.5 percent of the province’s total retail sales (Figure 1). The supermarket sector accounted for 16.0 percent of Canada's total retail sales in 2007.

A summary of key findings for Supermarket Sales and Food Expenditures is below.

Table 6. Key Findings for Supermarket Sales and Food Expenditures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supermarket Sales and Food Expenditures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• B.C. supermarket sales were valued at $9.9 billion in 2007 and Canadian supermarket sales were $65.8 billion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supermarkets are the largest single trade group in B.C.’s retail sector, representing 17.5 percent of the province’s total 2007 retail sales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Between 1998 and 2007, supermarket sales have been consistently higher on a per capita basis in B.C than in Canada. In 2007, B.C. accounted for 15.0 percent of Canada's total supermarket sales, and 13.3 percent of the country’s total population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• After accounting for population change and inflation, growth in supermarket sales has been slowing over the eight year period from 1999 to 2007 in B.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The average annual per capita real growth rate, which controls for both inflation and population change, declined in B.C. from 2.5 percent between 1999 and 2003, to 0.6 percent between 2003 and 2007.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In constant dollar terms, the average household expenditure on food purchased in B.C. stores has been fairly constant, with a real percentage change of only 1.4 percent between 1998 and 2006. During the same period, overall household consumption experienced real growth of 18.1 percent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Supermarket sales were consistently higher on a per capita basis in B.C. than in Canada during the nine year period from 1998 to 2007 (Table 7). The gap between average sales per capita in B.C. and Canada reached a peak in 2007, at $262 (constant 2002 dollars). Because of the higher per capita supermarket sales in B.C. compared to Canada, B.C.’s share of national supermarket sales was consistently higher than its share of the national population between 1998 and 2007. In 2007, B.C. accounted for 15.0 percent of Canada’s total supermarket sales, and 13.3 percent of the country’s total population.
Table 7. Supermarket Sales, Canada and B.C., 1998-2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Sales (Current Dollars)</th>
<th>Total Sales (2002 Dollars)</th>
<th>Sales per Capita (2002 Dollars)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canada (000s)</td>
<td>British Columbia (000s)</td>
<td>Canada (000s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>$46,774,019</td>
<td>$6,799,240</td>
<td>$51,231,127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>$47,786,414</td>
<td>$6,820,052</td>
<td>$51,438,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>$49,657,179</td>
<td>$7,151,022</td>
<td>$52,051,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>$51,514,084</td>
<td>$7,625,549</td>
<td>$52,672,888</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>$54,343,640</td>
<td>$8,133,544</td>
<td>$54,343,640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>$56,874,068</td>
<td>$8,468,512</td>
<td>$55,324,969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>$59,760,902</td>
<td>$8,940,706</td>
<td>$57,078,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>$62,196,282</td>
<td>$8,999,202</td>
<td>$58,127,366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>$63,764,704</td>
<td>$9,418,335</td>
<td>$58,446,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>$65,842,536</td>
<td>$9,899,988</td>
<td>$59,051,602</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources and Notes:
1. Sales data is a custom order from Statistics Canada’s CANSIM table 080-0015, Retail Trade, sales by trade group, quarterly, for NAIC 44511, Supermarkets and Other Grocery.

Table 8 shows that, after accounting for population changes and inflation, growth in supermarket sales has been slowing over the eight year period from 1999 to 2007 in B.C., bringing it more in line with the overall sector in Canada. During the four year period from 1999 to 2003, B.C.’s supermarket sales grew at an average annual rate of 3.4 percent after inflation; that growth slowed to 2.0 percent between 2003 and 2007. At the same time, population growth picked up from 3.6 percent between 1999 and 2003, to 5.4 percent between 2003 and 2007. The average annual per capita real growth rate, which controls for both inflation and population change, declined in B.C. from 2.5 percent between 1999 and 2003, to 0.7 percent between 2003 and 2007. The Canadian average annual per capita real growth rate declined marginally during this period, from 0.8 percent between 1999 and 2003, to 0.6 percent between 2003 and 2007.
Table 8. Real Growth in Supermarket Sales, Canada and B.C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canada</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermarket Sales</td>
<td>$47,786,414,000</td>
<td>$56,874,068,000</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>30,403,878</td>
<td>31,676,077</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI (all items, 2002=100)</td>
<td>92.9</td>
<td>102.8</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Growth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage Sales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Rate2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual Per</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capita Sales Growth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>British Columbia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermarket Sales</td>
<td>$6,820,052,000</td>
<td>$8,468,512,000</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>4,011,342</td>
<td>4,155,370</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI (all items, 2002=100)</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>102.2</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Sales Growth1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual Real</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Growth Rate2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual Per</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capita Real Sales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Rate2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Canada</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermarket Sales</td>
<td>$56,874,068,000</td>
<td>$65,842,536,000</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>31,676,077</td>
<td>32,976,026</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI (all items, 2002=100)</td>
<td>102.8</td>
<td>111.5</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Growth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Rate2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual Per</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capita Sales Percentage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Rate2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>British Columbia</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supermarket Sales</td>
<td>$8,468,512,000</td>
<td>$9,889,988,000</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>4,155,370</td>
<td>4,380,256</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPI (all items, 2002=100)</td>
<td>102.2</td>
<td>110.0</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real Sales Growth1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual Real</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Growth Rate2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Annual Per</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capita Real Sales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth Rate2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: See Table 7.

Notes:
1. Real Sales Growth is calculated as the percentage change in sales using constant dollars.
2. Average annual real growth rates are calculated using constant dollars with the following formula: ((ln(value_t2)-ln(value_t1))/(t2-t1)).
One of the factors behind the slowing growth of per capita sales in the industry is that food expenditures have not grown at the same rate as other household consumption expenditures. In constant dollar terms, the average household expenditure on food purchased in stores in B.C. has stayed fairly constant with a real percentage change of only 1.4 percent between 1998 and 2006. During the same period, overall household consumption expenditures experienced real growth of 18.1 percent in B.C.

Table 9. Household Expenditures on Food Purchased in Stores, Canada and B.C., 1998-2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>$39,292</td>
<td>$40,985</td>
<td>$4,912</td>
<td>$4,834</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>$39,811</td>
<td>$40,579</td>
<td>$5,000</td>
<td>$4,784</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>$40,531</td>
<td>$41,120</td>
<td>$5,009</td>
<td>$4,829</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>$41,025</td>
<td>$41,691</td>
<td>$4,978</td>
<td>$4,901</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>$42,665</td>
<td>$44,090</td>
<td>$5,059</td>
<td>$5,046</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>$41,826</td>
<td>$42,651</td>
<td>$4,988</td>
<td>$4,872</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>$42,672</td>
<td>$44,022</td>
<td>$5,015</td>
<td>$5,051</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>$43,561</td>
<td>$47,134</td>
<td>$4,948</td>
<td>$5,082</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>$44,698</td>
<td>$48,413</td>
<td>$4,928</td>
<td>$4,900</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources and Notes:
1. Expenditure data is a custom order from Statistics Canada’s CANSIM table 203-0001 - Survey of Household Spending (SHS), household spending, summary-level categories, by province, territory and selected metropolitan areas, and CANSIM table 203-0002 - Survey of Household Spending (SHS), household spending on food, by province and territory, annual.
2. Converted to 2002 dollars using the all-items Consumer Price Index (2002=100).
3. Household Consumption is the amount of expenses incurred during the reference year for food, shelter, household operations, household furnishings and equipment, clothing, transportation, health care, personal care, recreation, reading materials, education, tobacco products and alcoholic beverages, games of chance and miscellaneous groups of items.
4. Food expenditures refer to food purchased from stores.

The supermarket industry throughout Canada is responding creatively to competitive pressures arising from slowing rates of growth. Price competition is very strong and grocery organizations are looking to a range of strategies to differentiate themselves from the competition in order to continue to grow their customer base. Some of the strategies identified through a review of the current literature are:4

- emphasizing perishable products, such as meat, produce, prepared food, and deli and bakery items;
- focusing on natural and organic products;
- providing a unique shopping experience and improving store design;
- emphasizing consumer wellness and family health;
- providing niche stores to serve condominium dwellers in large urban centres;
- providing products and services to meet the needs of older shoppers;

increasing the range of ethnic food products available; and rationalization through mergers and acquisitions.

2.2 Key Employers

Statistics Canada’s Business Register shows that B.C. was home to about 1,598 supermarkets and other grocery stores in 2007, about 14.7 percent of the national total of 10,837. Data on the number of employees per establishment is available for 1,151 of the B.C. stores. The data show that B.C. has a range of supermarkets of varying size. Just over a quarter of all establishments are small, with between one and four employees. The remaining 75 percent of establishments are spread roughly equally across the size ranges until the largest size categories of 200-499 and over 500. Forty-three establishments in B.C. fall into the two largest size categories, or 3.8 percent of the total.

Figure 2. Distribution of Supermarkets and Other Grocery Stores, by Number of Employees, B.C., 2007

Source: Statistics Canada, Business Register, Canadian Business Patterns, Table PRNAIC6.ivt
Grocery store chains\(^5\) account for a larger proportion of overall sales in B.C. (71.3%) than in Canada (59.8%).\(^6\) The largest chains in B.C. are listed in Table 10, along with an estimate of the number of stores that each operates in the province.

Table 10. Largest Supermarket Chains in B.C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th># BC stores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overwaitea Food Group</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada Safeway Ltd.</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IGA</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Westfair Foods (Real Canadian Superstore)</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrifty Foods</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Foods</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairway Markets</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choices Markets</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


---

\(^5\) Grocery store chains are defined as organizations with four or more stores under single ownership

2.3 Employee Profile

The data for this section are from a custom tabulation of 2006 Census data focusing on industry 4451, Grocery Stores. The data from the Census reflect a snapshot of the industry on May 16, 2006, when 20 percent of Canadian households answered questions about the nature of the work they performed during the week prior to enumeration.

A total of 53,710 British Columbians were identified by the Census as being employed by grocery store organizations, 13 percent of the national total of 414,470. At the time of the Census, B.C. had approximately 12.4 grocery store employees per 1,000 population, slightly less than Canada at 12.7.

Detailed tables, including data for both Canada and B.C., are provided in Appendix B.

Summarized below are the key findings from the statistical profile of grocery store employees.

**Occupational Breakdown:** The occupational breakdown of the industry in Canada and in B.C. is almost identical. In both cases, over 80 percent of people employed in grocery stores are in sales and service occupations, such as the six occupations included in this study (Table 2). Management occupations account for a further 10 percent of employees in the B.C. industry and 11 percent in Canada.

**Work Arrangements**

**Full-time / Part-time:** The industry in B.C. relies slightly less on part-time labour than the national industry. Overall, half of employees in grocery stores throughout Canada are full-time; for B.C. the proportion is

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7 Note that sales figures presented earlier were for the five-digit industry 44511, Supermarkets and Other Grocery, Except Convenience Stores. The employee profile information from the Census includes convenience stores because Census data is not available at the same level of industry detail. The employee profile data is based on the four-digit industry—4451—Grocery Stores.
higher at 53 percent. The percentage working full-time in the sales and services occupations is substantially higher in B.C. at 47 percent, compared to Canada at 43 percent.

**Full-time / Part-time and Occupation:** At both the national and provincial level, the percentage of employees working full-time varies substantially by occupation, from a high of over 90 percent for management, to a low of 32 percent for cashiers in the national industry.

**Figure 4. Work Arrangements: Percentage of Employees Working Full-time, Selected Grocery Store Occupations, Canada and B.C.**

**Full-time / Part-time by Age:** Across all grocery store occupations, younger employees are more likely to be working part-time. Over three-quarters of those in the 15-24 age group in both B.C. (77%) and Canada (79%) work less than 30 hours a week. The 35-44 and 45-54 age groups are the least likely to be working part-time in both the Canadian and B.C. industries; approximately a quarter of these employees work part-time.
**Gender:** In both the national and provincial industries, women out-number men.

**Figure 5. Gender Distribution of Employees in Grocery Stores, Canada and B.C.**

**Gender by Occupation:** In B.C., there are more female employees than males in three of the six sales and services occupations included in this study; men out-number females in the occupations of supervisor, meat cutter and clerk. Among management staff, there are fewer women than men in both the provincial (33%) and national (40%) industries.

**Figure 6. Percentage of Employees who are Female, Selected Grocery Store Occupations, Canada and B.C.**

- **Managers:** 53% (Canada), 55% (B.C.), 53% (Canada), 55% (B.C.).
- **Cashiers:** 86% (Canada), 89% (B.C.).
- **Bakers:** 40% (Canada), 33% (B.C.).
- **Sales clerks:** 72% (Canada), 70% (B.C.), 71% (Canada), 71% (B.C.).
- **Supervisors:** 51% (Canada), 46% (B.C.).
- **Clerks & store shelf stockers:** 28% (Canada), 32% (B.C.).
- **Meat cutters:** 33% (Canada), 24% (B.C.).
**Income:** The median, full-time income of grocery workers in B.C. ($27,966) was approximately $4,000 higher than for a full-time grocery worker in Canada ($23,930). The median part-time income was also higher in B.C.

**Figure 7. Median Income by Employment Arrangement, All Grocery Store Occupations, Canada and B.C.**

![Chart showing median income for full-time and part-time grocery workers in Canada and B.C.]

**Age:** B.C. grocery workers tend to be a bit older than those in the overall Canadian industry. Thirty-eight percent of B.C.’s workers are in the youngest age group (15-24), compared with 43 percent of grocery workers across Canada.

**Figure 8. Grocery Store Employees by Age, All Occupations, Canada and B.C.**

![Chart showing the distribution of grocery store employees by age in Canada and B.C.]
**Education**: Grocery workers in B.C. are more likely to have finished high school than their counterparts in the Canadian industry overall. Thirty percent of Canadian grocery workers have not completed high school, compared with 23 percent of B.C. grocery workers. B.C. workers (6%) are less likely to have completed an apprenticeship training program than Canadian workers (8%).

**Figure 9. Highest Level of Educational Attainment, All Grocery Store Occupations, Canada and B.C**

**Education by Age Group**: One might think that the higher educational attainment of B.C. grocery workers is a result of their older age profile. However, the table below shows that in every age group, B.C. grocery workers tend to be more highly educated, except with respect to apprenticeship training and college. In the area of apprenticeship, B.C. is lagging the overall Canadian industry particularly in the 25 to 44 age groups.

**Table 11. Educational Attainment, By Age Group and Region**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Attainment</th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>15-24</th>
<th>25-34</th>
<th>35-44</th>
<th>45-54</th>
<th>55-64</th>
<th>65 and over</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduation certificate or equivalent</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College, CEGEP, or other non-university certificate or diploma</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B.C.</td>
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<td>16%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University certificate or diploma below bachelor's degree</td>
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<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B.C.</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University certificate, diploma, or degree</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Canada</td>
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<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B.C.</td>
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3. INDUSTRY-WIDE AND OCCUPATION-SPECIFIC FINDINGS

This chapter profiles the approaches used by the grocery sector in general, and in B.C. in particular, to ensure that employees have the level of essential skills necessary to succeed in their work. This is done at a national level first, by reviewing the findings and recommendations stemming from the Canadian Food Industry Council’s (CFIC) Creating the Future Update Survey. The chapter then profiles the B.C.-specific findings from this study, beginning with a general description of industry trends, approaches to training at an industry-level, and barriers to training. This is followed by a detailed look at each of the six grocery retail occupations in terms of demographics, typical duties, current essential skills training, and potential essential skill gaps.

3.1 National Industry Findings

The CFIC represents the interests of food retail and wholesale employers in Canada. Incorporated in 2003, this nationally recognized sectoral council exists to support a collective response to the food retail/wholesale industry’s human resource challenges. Their vision is to take a leadership role in providing human resource tools that help member organizations to develop a qualified workforce, reduce employee turnover and position the industry as a desirable career choice.

The CFIC conducted a survey in 2004 designed to address human resource issues related to the recruitment, development and retention of employees in a context of increasing competition in the industry. The survey findings and recommendations are contained in the CFIC’s 2004 report: Creating the Future Update Survey, available on the organization’s website. Many of the CFIC’s findings and recommendations are very relevant to this work and provide valuable context.

Based on the results of the 2003 Adult Education and Training Survey conducted by Statistics Canada, the CFIC notes that the grocery retail sector provides substantially less formal training to its employees compared with other industries; 16.8 percent of employees in food retail indicated that they had taken formal employer-supported training, compared with 17.5 percent for all retail sectors and 25.7 percent for all sectors.

Below is a summary of some of the key findings from the CFIC study:

- **Part-time employees**: The CFIC asked respondents if enough was being done to identify and develop part-time employees. Some respondents indicated that part-timers are seen as a transient population with higher turnover rates. Organizations are therefore hesitant to invest in training for these employees. Part-time employment is a reality for this industry because people like to shop at the same time and additional shifts are needed to cover peak load times. The concern is that people will not make a career in the grocery sector if they cannot find full-time work. Management employees have traditionally come from the ranks and as reliance on part-time increases, the pool of full-time employees on which to draw for management is shrinking.

- **Training delivery**: On-the-job training during working hours, delivered by supervisors or co-workers, is the most commonly used form of training in this industry. Some use of classroom or off-site training targeted mainly to managers, supervisors and skilled trades is emerging, as are...
instances of union/employer cooperation in skills development. There are also college and university programs, mainly targeted to the trades and managerial occupations.

- **Most critical areas of skills development**: When asked to identify the most critical areas of skills development, responses included a mix of skills, knowledge areas and occupations: meat cutters, bakers, florists, pharmacists, customer service, deli, management, food safety, product knowledge, and sanitation. Customer service is identified as a skill that cuts across all occupations and is critical to the grocery business. The occupations mentioned are ones where grocers are experiencing difficulty recruiting qualified workers.

Below is a summary of CFIC’s recommendations that are relevant to this study:

- **Partnerships with educational institutions**: that unions and grocery organizations, together with industry associations, work with training and educational institutions to develop cost-effective generic training programs that reflect the Canadian industry context, and that can then be tailored to the current and future needs of individual organizations.

- **Skill needs of management staff**: that industry collaborate with training and educational institutions to ensure that the present and anticipated specific skill needs of management staff are met fully and cost-effectively. For independent operators, this will include important additional skills in entrepreneurship and small business management.

- **Train-the-trainer**: that a train-the-trainer course be developed to improve the quality of on-the-job training in the industry. This course should include new training materials and mediums, and standardized content specific to this industry.

- **Focus on independents**: that governments and industry associations develop and promote services that assist firms in the industry, especially independents, to improve the quality of their training planning processes. Mechanisms for this purpose include: workshops and other means to help firms select training agents and needs-assessment agencies; and identification of appropriate and cost-effective resources to help firms assess the impact of training on skill levels, productivity, etc.

- **Build skills that are portable**: that firms incorporate into their training activities, the development of skills which are required within their firms, but are also portable to other firms and sectors, and which will enhance employees’ employability should they lose their jobs in this industry. These portable skills include computer skills, interpersonal skills, and problem-solving skills, among others.

Although the CFIC study focused on the national context and is now four-years old, many of the themes identified above are echoed in the remainder of this chapter, which focuses on the B.C. results from this
study. The fourth and final chapter of this report combines the recommendations of the CFIC above with the B.C. findings, and suggests a pilot project to address essential skills in the B.C. grocery industry.

### 3.2 B.C. Industry Findings

This study revealed that the human resources challenges for the B.C. grocery retail sector are very similar to those identified in the CFIC’s national study. B.C. grocers are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain workers. Several interviewees noted that there is a lack of recognition for the industry and its workers. Retail grocery is no longer seen as a career and therefore does not attract people seeking full-time, long-term work in the numbers required to ensure development of future industry leaders. Grocers reported having particular difficulty filling meat cutter, baker and deli positions.

In some cases, interviewees attributed the difficulty with recruitment and retention to wage levels in the grocery retail industry and the fact that young employees can earn much higher wages in other industries. One interviewee noted that he tends to lose his part-time employees in the summer months to higher paying construction jobs. As the 2010 Olympics approaches, the industry in B.C. may experience intensified competition from other industries for human resources. An interviewee indicated that people are not attracted to meat cutting as a career, particularly in the grocery retail sector, because of relatively low wages. Efforts are underway to broaden the appeal of meat cutting as a profession with the launch of a new website – Join the Meatforce – that provides information about the industry, how to get training and job opportunities.

Others pointed to poor availability of higher level training programs. For example, there is only one location in B.C. for meat cutter certification, at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops. The travel required to study meat cutting likely deters many British Columbians from pursuing this career. Similarly, Red Seal Baker’s certification is only available in B.C. at Vancouver Island University and this may deter mainland residents from pursuing baking as a career. External training for retail managers customized to the grocery sector is also hard to find in the province.

And there are other changes in the retail grocery workforce that limit grocers’ abilities to maintain skilled workers. A single store may now have up to four generations in its workforce, each with different work expectations and goals. Many stores have a workforce with a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds including both immigrants and First Nations. As well, some store owners/managers make it a policy to hire a percentage of persons with physical and/or mental disabilities. All of these factors create significant HR challenges for the retail grocery sector and may lead to a greater need for essential skills training than was previously the case.

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9 The website is a project of the Canadian Professional Meat Cutters Association, with funding from the Agriculture and Food Council of Alberta, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Agriculture Council of Saskatchewan Inc., and the Investment in Agriculture Foundation of British Columbia and is found at www.meatforce.ca

10 Formerly Malaspina University-College.
Industry-Wide Approaches to Training

One common finding among all stores interviewed is that they rely on on-the-job training to meet most of their training needs. The grocery retail industry operates in a fast-paced, competitive environment. It is often not practical to send employees off-site for training. For these reasons, various forms of on-the-job training, ranging from fairly structured and formal to informal, are the standard for this industry.

Larger chains are more likely to have formal, on-the-job training programs delivered by designated trainers who have received training on how to train. Some components may be delivered in a group setting, or made available to employees through a computer terminal or manual. In general, smaller chains and single stores are less likely to be able to provide structured and formal training for anyone except managers. Most stores, will, however, provide financial support to employees who wish to take the meat cutter or baker certification. And at least two stores noted that they will pay for employees to take external training if the employee can first demonstrate the relevance and value to their current position and then complete the course.

In our interviews, we frequently heard examples of the industry working together to meet training needs. Managers of smaller stores noted that their suppliers sometimes come to the store to teach staff about new processes or products; in other cases, these sessions are held in central locations and stores are invited to send employees. Some stores are members of a co-op and have access to standardized training provided by Federated Co-operatives Ltd. One manager of a chain told us that their union provides ESL training to help address language skill needs in their multi-cultural workforce.

All stores interviewed, regardless of size, utilize in-house standard orientation and training programs for all new employees. These usually include sessions on company policies, expectations of employees, benefits, and safety procedures. New employees are also paired with a more experienced employee in the same department for anywhere from one day to several months, depending on the complexity and risks of the job (for example, a very ‘green’ meat cutter might be paired with a more experienced meat cutter for up to 6 months before being left to work on his/her own.) One grocery chain requires that all employees have a minimum of 4 hours of training before they can work on their own.

The mandatory Workers’ Compensation Board (WCB) new employee training is included in all orientation programs. All stores require all employees who handle food in the course of their duties to receive Level I Food Safe training, and some require all employees to take this training. Because this is available in high schools, most new employees bring this qualification to the job. However, all stores interviewed will pay for employees to get this training, which can be accessed through various sources, such as Health Authorities, Regional Districts, Community Colleges and private trainers. Some stores pay for longer term employees to take Level II Food Safe as well.

The essential skill that all stores include in their training provided to all their employees is Oral Communication. This consistently emerged as a key skill in every grocery retail occupation and was frequently mentioned as the most valuable skill an employee could bring to the job. This is not surprising because the ability to communicate orally is a cornerstone of good customer service. The retail grocery industry is very customer-service oriented and in an era of increasing industry competition, the ability to interact positively with the customer and to understand and meet their needs in an engaging way, is critical to business success.
Interviewees identified a variety of methods used to deliver customer service training and to reinforce its practice by staff. Most stores have checklists that department managers or supervisors review with new employees and may ask them to sign; many use videos or scenario playing; one store has computerized customer service training so that staff can work on the training when the store is less busy; another store holds group sessions in the evenings with training delivered by the HR Manager. Most stores use Communication Books – one per department – where critical new information for staff is posted. All department employees are required to read these when they come on shift and may be required to sign them in some cases.

**Barriers to Training**

Availability and accessibility are significant barriers to training for retail grocers. Issues relating to meat cutter and baker certification have already been noted. Training in supervisory and people management skills for retail grocery was also frequently identified as a significant gap in available training. Interviewees also noted that good training on the business side for managers is hard to find. One manager suggested that a certificate or diploma in retail grocery management would not only help to address this, but would also raise the profile of the industry and encourage more people to consider it as a career.

Time and cost are also major barriers to training in the retail grocery sector. Many managers told us that they had excellent senior staff who were very good in-house trainers, but the pace and demands of the industry make it difficult to free them to provide the training. Similarly, the salaries of trainees must still be paid while they are being trained. Part-time staffing brings the additional challenges of reduced availability for training, longer periods between training sessions, a greater need to repeat material, and higher turnover - all of which make training more time-consuming and expensive to provide. Costs and time issues are exacerbated if employees must travel off-site for training. Transportation was noted as a significant issue for First Nations staff in particular.

*Customer service was frequently mentioned as the single, most important skill that any employee in the industry can possess.*

*The retail world doesn’t stop for training.*

Response from an interviewee.
When Essential Skills are Lacking

In our interviews, we asked managers about their experience with employees lacking essential skills. Some provided examples (such as the one in the call-box below) of how the absence of these essential skills can negatively influence their business. Stores in areas with higher populations of immigrants have had employees with language problems, and cases of low literacy and learning problems were noted by some interviewees. A general comment was that employees with high school graduation today lack the mental math skills that older employees developed in school.

Without exception, however, managers said that they would work with any employee lacking an essential skill to develop that skill, or to find a more suitable position in the store, and would dismiss the employee only after all efforts failed. A common comment from managers was that they “hire for attitude” and if the employee has the right attitude, they can “train the rest”. Employers also try to prevent essential skills issues from arising by placing new employees in positions that fit their skill set. For instance, interviewees mentioned that out-going people are more likely to be placed in positions where they will have more interaction with customers.

In some cases, managers said, it is not worth investing in training to address a missing essential skill. For example, supervisors may have to help younger cashiers with mental math challenges such as currency conversion, adding cash withdrawals to debit card transactions, etc. But since cash is used so infrequently now and so many cashiers are part-time, it is not cost-effective to train younger cashiers in the use of these skills. In other cases, such as oral communication skills, where a skill is critical to success, stores will work one-on-one to address specific gaps.

3.3 Occupation-Specific Findings

This section provides a detailed profile of each of the six grocery occupations that are the focus of this study. The information presented in this section is drawn from the custom Census tabulation, interviews with grocery managers and the employee survey results. Each profile provides information about the specific demographic characteristics of that occupation in B.C., typical duties, current essential skills training, and potential essential skill gaps.
Store and Department Supervisors – NOC 6211

Introduction
The increasing range of ages, cultural backgrounds and career goals in the retail grocery workforce has heightened the need for supervisors to be able to accept and work effectively with a wide range of people. This makes Level Three oral communication skills, such as coaching staff on performance, resolving conflicts, and counseling staff, a critical requirement. Supervisors come from the ranks in the grocery business; most supervisors have gained valuable experience in more junior positions. This experience also builds the product and operations knowledge which effective supervisors must have.

A summary of key findings for the Supervisor occupation is presented in the box below.

Key Interview and Employee Survey Findings - Store and Department Supervisors

Supervisors must possess and effectively apply both people management skills and grocery operations skills.

Most valuable skills in the B.C. grocery context, as identified by interviewees:
- oral communication
- working with others
- problem solving
- numeracy

Training
- much knowledge and training is acquired on-the-job in other positions before becoming a supervisor
- some stores require new supervisors to do introductory training; the format for this varies
- most stores provide some form of training for supervisors in leadership/people management, and in product/operations knowledge

Essential skill gaps
- **Oral Communication** – Higher level oral communication skills (Level Three) required for managing and motivating a diverse workforce.
- **Thinking Skills** – Job Task Planning – Half of the supervisor respondents to the employee survey agreed that it is hard to get their work done because of frequent interruptions.
- **Numeracy** – Supervisors performed below the overall average on the Level Two numeracy question, which involved currency conversion.
- **Computer Skills** – Some interviewees noted that computers will figure more prominently in the duties of supervisors in the future.

These gaps may change as the pool of ‘career-grocery’ candidates for supervisory positions shrinks.

Profile in Brief
There are 3,345 supervisors working in B.C. grocery stores. This is approximately one-tenth (8%) of all sales and service employees working in B.C. grocery stores. Supervisors are almost equally composed of men (54%) and women (46%), and most (86%) work full-time. Two-thirds of supervisors have a high
school education or less and the majority (76%) are between the ages of 25 and 54. A four-page statistical profile is provided at the end of the supervisor section.

**Duties**

The duties identified by HRSDC for supervisors were reviewed with B.C. grocery managers to obtain an updated picture. In some stores, particularly smaller operations, supervisors do not authorize payments by cheque. This would be done by either central office staff or cashiers. As well, not all supervisors are involved in the return of groceries and other merchandise. In these stores, this too would be done by cashiers.

**List of Supervisor Duties – B.C. Grocery Sector**

- Supervise and co-ordinate sales staff and cashiers;
- Assign sales workers to duties and prepare work schedules;
- May authorize payments by cheque and the return of groceries and other merchandise;
- Sell groceries and other merchandise to customers;
- Resolve problems that arise, such as customer complaints and supply shortages;
- Maintain specified inventory and order merchandise;
- Prepare reports regarding sales volumes, merchandising and personnel matters;
- Clean work area;
- Maintain work areas to meet safety requirements; and
- Hire and train or arrange for the training of new staff.

**Educational Requirements and Pre-screening**

Most stores indicated they would prefer Grade 12 graduation, but it is not a requirement. In almost all stores interviewed, supervisors are hired internally and have already worked in several jobs in the store. Supervisors hired externally would need several years of retail experience supported by good references. One store requires staff who want to become supervisors to complete a home study course and subsequent test.

**Most Valuable Skill**

**Oral Communication** was named by all stores as the single most valuable skill a supervisor can possess. This skill is essential because it underlies a supervisor’s ability to successfully establish good working relationships with his/her staff and ability to interact well with the public.

Specific skills identified by interviewees as valuable to supervisors include:

- **Oral Communication** - Supervisors need many Level Three oral communication skills. They must be proficient at adapting their management style appropriately, communicating effectively with people
from different cultural backgrounds, and resolving conflicts. Changes in the labour pool mean that store workforces now encompass up to four generations and a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Stores in some regions of B.C. have high proportions of First Nations employees. Some of the stores interviewed also seek to hire workers with mental and physical disabilities. The store managers we interviewed indicated that this diversity in the workforce has made it increasingly critical for supervisors to be able to adapt to various cultures and workstyles and to be able to communicate with employees at a level that is appropriate for each one.

Oral communication skills are also needed by supervisors who are frequently required to resolve complaints with customers and may be required to deal with suppliers regarding inventory and ordering. In addition, many supervisors are involved in making sales to the customers.

**Problem Solving** - Supervisors must be able to assess situations and determine how to apply the most effective solution, often with little time. This involves multi-tasking and an appreciation for logical sequencing.

**Numeracy** – This is particularly important for head cashiers who count cash, balance the tills and do pricing.

**Working with others** – Supervisors must interact with large numbers of staff and managers.

**Training**
In almost all stores we interviewed, supervisors are hired internally after several years of experience and on-the-job training. They are typically chosen to be supervisors because they have demonstrated an ability to work with others and to problem-solve. Two stores we studied also require new supervisors to take an introductory program. One of these is a self-study program culminating in a test; the other is a combination of classroom and workplace training. Two other stores provide training delivered by external trainers for supervisors throughout the year. In all cases, the training provided to supervisors addresses both operations/technical knowledge and leadership/people management skills.

Some of the specific activities included in training that address essential skills include:

- **Oral Communication** – presentations by external professionals on HR topics, e.g., harassment prevention, employment law, recruitment & selection, employee performance management; classroom training on how to lead unionized staff; evening group sessions held in-house on leadership skills.

- **Problem Solving** – external courses on sales, marketing, profit margins. Supervisors in smaller stores may also have one-on-one sessions with head managers or owners to learn about store sales and marketing, supplier management, etc. One large chain focuses classroom sessions on building supervisor confidence and knowledge so that they will be better able to problem solve and make decisions.

- **Customer Service** – information on new products is acquired through supplier presentations and attendance at grocery shows and conventions. Oral communication and interacting positively with customers are reinforced through Leadership Training for existing staff and orientation training for new supervisors.
Essential Skill Gaps

Supervisors in the grocery retail sector must manage a challenging, fast-paced workforce. They have to deal with conflict regularly, whether it is a customer issue that has been escalated to the supervisor or a staff issue. Interviewees generally did not feel that supervisory performance is impacted by essential skill gaps. However, they did identify some areas where they would like to see more training available for supervisors:

- **Oral Communication** - On the employee survey, 67 percent of the 152 supervisors who responded agreed that resolving conflicts between staff members is one of the most challenging parts of their job. Supervisors in grocery retail are not business school graduates with extensive leadership training – there may be a need for a continued and enhanced focus on the development of higher level oral communication skills. This observation is reflected in comments from interviewees that pointed to a need for more training on team development, people management, and communicating effectively with different people.

- **Thinking Skills – Job Task Planning** – Supervisors must perform job task planning skills at Level Three, reflecting the frequent need to re-sequence tasks as a result of interruptions. Half of the supervisor respondents to the employee survey agreed that it is hard to get their work done because of frequent interruptions.

- **Numeracy** – Supervisors performed below the overall average on the Level Two numeracy question, which involved currency conversion. Sixty-three percent of supervisors got this question correct, compared with 66 percent of all respondents. Given their need to guide others, ideally, supervisors should be above the average of all employees in numeracy.

- **Computer Skills** – It is anticipated by some interviewees that supervisors will be required to use computers more in the future.

Many of the essential skills of supervisors are developed during the time they spend in more junior positions. For this reason, most stores have traditionally hired supervisors internally. However, several interviewees noted that the number of employees making retail grocery a career is dropping. This may result in more inexperienced supervisors being hired, which may in turn, increase the need for training programs to replace on-the-job experience. Some interviewees told us that younger employees lack some of the skills that older employees have, e.g. mental math skills. As these younger employees move up to fill supervisory positions, the need for training in essential skills such as numeracy may increase.
STOR AND DEPARTMENT SUPERVISORS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

SUPERVISORS AS PERCENTAGE OF ALL SALES AND SERVICE OCCUPATIONS
IN B.C. GROCERY STORES

GENDER DISTRIBUTION,
Grocery store supervisors in B.C.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT,
Grocery store supervisors in B.C.

FULL TIME / PART TIME,
Grocery store supervisors in B.C.

FULL-TIME / PART-TIME, BY AGE GROUP,
Grocery store supervisors in B.C.

<table>
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<th>Age Group</th>
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<th>% Full Time</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Canada, custom tabulation from the 2006 Census.
STORE AND DEPARTMENT SUPERVISORS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

NUMBER OF GROCERY SUPERVISORS, BY AGE GROUP, B.C.

MEDIAN SALARY FOR RETAIL SALES OCCUPATIONS IN GROCERY STORES, B.C., 2005

MEDIAN EMPLOYMENT INCOME,
Grocery store supervisors in B.C., 2005

Worked mostly full-time: $39,152
Worked mostly part-time: $13,429
All supervisors: $35,096

Note: Full-time is defined as 30 hours or more per week
Part-time is defined as 1 to 29 hours per week

Source: Statistics Canada, custom tabulation from the 2006 Census.
Essential Skill: Reading
I can read and understand information about price changes, sales and special events.

- Strongly Agree: 82%
- Agree: 17%
- Neutral: 1%
- Disagree: 0%
- Strongly Disagree: 0%

Essential Skill: Oral Communication
When a customer is upset about a product or service, I can help them at least 80 percent of the time.

- Strongly Agree: 79%
- Agree: 20%
- Neutral: 1%
- Disagree: 0%
- Strongly Disagree: 0%

Essential Skill: Oral Communication - Resolving Conflicts
Resolving conflicts between staff members is one of the most challenging parts of my job.

- Strongly Agree: 22%
- Agree: 45%
- Neutral: 20%
- Disagree: 13%
- Strongly Disagree: 0%

Essential Skill: Thinking - Job Task Planning
It is hard to manage my time because of frequent interruptions (for example, price checks, customer questions, equipment breakdowns, changing priorities, etc.).

- Strongly Agree: 12%
- Agree: 38%
- Neutral: 20%
- Disagree: 23%
- Strongly Disagree: 8%
STORE AND DEPARTMENT SUPERVISORS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA:
SURVEY RESULTS
n=152

Essential Skill: Thinking - Problem Solving

When a cashier or other staff member makes an error, I always know how to fix it.

![Bar chart showing responses to the question about fixing errors.]

Supervisor Scores on Document Use and Numeracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Use</th>
<th>Store Supervisor and Head Cashier Score</th>
<th>Dept. Supervisor Score</th>
<th>Overall Supervisor Score</th>
<th>Overall Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 1</strong></td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Level 2</strong></td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numeracy</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 - time</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 - multiplication</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 - currency</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=38                    n=107                    n=135                    n=315
Meat Cutters – NOC 6251

Introduction
All interviewees indicated that there is a shortage of people interested in working as meat cutters in the grocery retail sector. Meat cutting is a skilled trade, for which training and testing is required in order to achieve certification. Interviewees are not requiring meat cutter candidates to be certified, rather, they are hiring those who are interested in this career and training them through their own apprenticeship programs, or through the apprenticeship program at Thompson Rivers University.

A summary of key findings for the Meat Cutter occupation is presented in the box below.

Key Interview and Employee Survey Findings - Meat Cutters
Retail grocers in B.C. are having trouble recruiting meat cutters.

Most valuable skills in the B.C. grocery context, as identified by interviewees:
- planning and thinking
- oral communication
- working with others
- numeracy

Training
- formal and informal apprenticeship programs
- on-the-job training
- training focuses on oral communication, and job duties

Essential skill gaps
- The survey results suggest that meat cutters may have a gap in document use skills at Level Two, however, the number of meat cutters who responded to the survey is very low.

Profile in Brief
There are 2,240 meat cutters working in B.C. grocery stores. This represents only 5 percent of all sales and service employees working in B.C. grocery stores. Two-thirds of meat cutters in B.C. are male, and about one third work part-time. Just over half (56%) of meat cutters have a high school education or less; and another 27 percent have a trade certificate or diploma. Meat cutters are fairly evenly distributed in age from 15 to 64 with the largest group (27%) being between the ages of 45 and 54. A four-page statistical profile is provided at the end of the meat cutter section.

Most important essential skills for Meat Cutters
1. Document use
2. Working with others
3. Oral communication

Source: CFIC
Duties
The duties identified by the Canadian Food Industry Council for meat cutters were generally confirmed by all stores interviewed. One store noted that the slicing of cooked meats is a function of their deli clerks. The requirement to maintain a clean and safe work area was added to the list.

List of Meat Cutter Duties – B.C. Grocery Sector

- Cut, trim and otherwise prepare standard cuts of meat for sale at self-serve counters or for customer orders;
- Grind uncooked meats using power grinders; may also slice cooked meats using slicing machines;
- Prepare special meat displays;
- Shape, lace and tie roasts and other meats, and wrap prepared meats;
- Manage inventory—keep records of sales, and track quantity, product line and freshness of products according to company and customer requirements;
- Ensure adequate food storage conditions;
- Clean work area;
- Maintain work areas to meet safety requirements; and
- Supervise other meat cutters.

Educational Requirements and Pre-screening
There was a general consensus among store managers interviewed that while they would prefer high school graduation and experience and/or a meat cutter’s ticket, the reality is that this has become an unrealistic expectation. As for all occupations, most stores use the interview to screen potential employees for a positive attitude, a desire to work, and ability to interact with the public. References are used to confirm these attributes. A candidate with related experience might get preference but most stores will train meat cutters on-the-job if the person has the right attitude.

Most Valuable Skill
When asked what is the single most valuable skill a meat cutter can possess, planning and thinking skills were the most commonly mentioned. Meat cutters must be in tune with factors that will impact the customer demand; e.g., the weather, holidays, celebrations and local events, weekly specials etc., and arrange meat orders and preparation accordingly. Other skills that interviewees considered valuable to meat cutters are:

- Oral Communication and Customer Service – While many stores no longer cut meat to order to the extent that “Butchers” used to, most meat cutters still deal directly with the public at the meat counter and are required to answer customer questions about cuts, prices, etc.

- Working with Others – Meat cutters are typically part of a team and must be able to work effectively with other team members to ensure that the right products are available to meet customer needs and to ensure the health and safety of team members and the customer.
Numeracy – In some stores, meat cutters are required to price items for payment at the main checkout. Customers may also ask meat cutters to help them estimate costs or required portions, or to convert weights between metric and imperial systems.

Training
All the stores interviewed provide on-the-job training for meat cutters and almost all of them provide formal or informal apprenticeship training that would give an employee the necessary experience for certification if they wished to take the exam. One store noted that they partner inexperienced meat cutters with more senior meat cutters for 3-4 months of initial training. One of the larger chains has an in-house training program of 2,080 hours. A third store is piloting a partnership with the local high school to provide initial apprenticeship training as part of high school graduation. Most stores interviewed said they would pay for an employee to acquire certification through the apprenticeship program available at Thompson Rivers University.

Essential Skill Gaps
Interviewees did not identify any essential skill gaps that specifically relate to meat cutter performance. Almost all store managers interviewed did, however, say that accessibility to certification training for meat cutters is a serious issue. Currently, there is only one certification program in the province. This increases the time and cost of training such that fewer people want to take it and stores find it more difficult to support employees who do take it. Meat cutters are becoming increasingly difficult to hire.

The job of meat cutter in the grocery retail sector is substantially different in terms of skill requirements than in a traditional butcher shop. The CFIC has undertaken an extensive consultation process to develop National Occupation Standards (NOS) for the meat cutter profession in the grocery sector. Part of the motivation for this undertaking was that the industry felt that existing apprenticeship programs were not reflective of the occupation as it is represented in the grocery retail sector, and developed a much higher level of skill than was required in the sector (i.e., with case ready meats as opposed to custom cutting in the store).

The CFIC essential skills profile for meat cutters identifies document use as one of the most important essential skills, and refers to a number of Level Two tasks, such as reading shipping and receiving forms and locating detailed information on supplier order lists. While only eight meat cutters responded to the employee survey, just over half gave the correct answer to the Level Two document use question.
MEAT CUTTERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

MEAT CUTTERS AS PERCENTAGE OF ALL SALES AND SERVICE OCCUPATIONS IN B.C. GROCERY STORES

GENDER DISTRIBUTION, Grocery store meat cutters in B.C.

FULL TIME / PART TIME, Grocery store meat cutters in B.C.

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, Grocery store meat cutters in B.C.

FULL-TIME / PART-TIME, BY AGE GROUP, Grocery store meat cutters in B.C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>% Part-time</th>
<th>% Full-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>82%</td>
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<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Canada, custom tabulation from the 2006 Census.
MEAT CUTTERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

NUMBER OF GROCERY STORE MEAT CUTTERS BY AGE GROUP, B.C.

MEDIAN SALARY FOR RETAIL SALES OCCUPATIONS IN GROCERY STORES, B.C., 2005

MEDIAN EMPLOYMENT INCOME,
Grocery store meat cutters in B.C., 2005

Worked mostly full-time: $38,139
Worked mostly part-time: $9,349
All meat cutters: $25,081

Note: Full-time is defined as 30 hours or more per week
Part-time is defined as 1 to 29 hours per week

Source: Statistics Canada, custom tabulation from the 2006 Census.
MEAT CUTTERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: SURVEY RESULTS
n=8

Essential Skill: Reading
I can read and understand information about price changes, sales and special events.

Strongly Agree 28%
Agree 50%
Neutral 13%
Disagree 0%
Strongly Disagree 0%

Essential Skill: Oral Communication
I am good at listening to customers and suggesting the cut of meat that would best fit their needs.

Strongly Agree 63%
Agree 8%
Neutral 0%
Disagree 0%
Strongly Disagree 0%

Essential Skill: Oral Communication
When I talk to co-workers or my supervisor about which cuts to prepare first, I get the information I need quickly.

Strongly Agree 50%
Agree 50%
Neutral 0%
Disagree 0%
Strongly Disagree 0%

Essential Skill: Thinking - Job Task Planning
It is hard to manage my time because of frequent interruptions (for example, price checks, customer questions, equipment breakdowns, changing priorities, etc.).

Strongly Agree 0%
Agree 0%
Neutral 50%
Disagree 38%
Strongly Disagree 13%
MEAT CUTTERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: SURVEY RESULTS

n=8

Essential Skill: Working with Others

When I have been unsure about how to perform certain tasks, other workers or my supervisor have helped me.

Meat cutter Scores on Document Use and Numeracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Use</th>
<th>Meatcutter Score</th>
<th>Overall Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>79%</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numeracy</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 - time</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 - multiplication</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 - currency</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=7 n=315
**Bakers – NOC 6252**

**Introduction**

Baking is an occupation where retail grocers in B.C. are having difficulty finding enough candidates to fill available positions. Baking is part of the Red Seal program, which means that a certified journeyperson who achieves Red Seal endorsement can practice their trade in any province or territory in Canada where the trade is designated, without further training or assessment.

A summary of key findings for the Baker occupation is presented in the box below.

### Key Interview and Employee Survey Findings - Bakers

Grocers in B.C. are having difficulty recruiting people to work in the bakery and are not requiring any prior training or certification.

Most valuable skills in the B.C. grocery context, as identified by interviewees:

- job task planning
- oral communication
- working with others
- numeracy

**Training**

- formal and informal apprenticeship programs
- on-the-job training
- training focuses on oral communication, and job duties

**Essential skill gaps**

- There is some evidence from discussions with Vancouver Island University that apprentices often lack essential skills, particularly in the areas of reading, numeracy and problem solving, needed for success in the apprenticeship program.
- Job task planning is an area where employees indicated they are having difficulties and one interviewee also identified this as area for improvement.

**Profile in Brief**

There are 2,030 bakers working in B.C. grocery stores. This represents only 5 percent of all sales and service employees in the industry. Almost 60 percent of bakers in B.C. are female, and 39 percent work part-time. Just over half (51%) of bakers have a high school education or less, and another 16 percent have a trade certificate or diploma. The two largest age groups for bakers are 15-24 and 35-44, each accounting for about 28 percent of all bakers. A four-page statistical profile is provided at the end of the baker section.

**Most important essential skills for bakers**

4. Job task planning and organizing
5. Oral communication
6. Decision making

Source: CFIC
Duties
The duties identified by the Canadian Food Industry Council and HRSDC for bakers were generally confirmed, with a few exceptions. Bakers do not commonly plan menus, and most of what is baked in grocery stores is not from scratch; it comes in frozen form and bakers simply put it in the oven. The requirement to maintain a clean and safe work area was added to the list.

List of Baker Duties – B.C. Grocery Sector

- Produce baked goods for the bakery department from scratch, from mixes and by completing the process with frozen or par-baked products;
- Operate large proofers, ovens, mixers, automated dividers, rounding, sheeting and moulding machines for the production of large volumes of products such as batches of 70-100 loaves of bread;
- Schedule and supervise kitchen helpers, such as wrappers/packagers and cake decorators;
- Oversee bakery operations;
- Maintain inventory and records of food, supplies and equipment;
- May clean kitchen and work area;
- May plan menus, determine size of food portions, estimate food requirements and costs, and monitor and order supplies;
- Maintain work areas to meet safety requirements; and
- May hire and train bakery staff.

Educational Requirements and Pre-screening
There was a general consensus among store managers interviewed that while they would prefer high school graduation and experience and/or a baker’s ticket, the reality is that this has become an unrealistic expectation. As for all occupations, most stores use the interview to screen potential employees for a positive attitude, a desire to work, and ability to interact with the public. References are used to confirm these attributes. A candidate with related experience might get preference, but most stores will train bakers on-the-job if the person has the right attitude.

Most Valuable Skill
When asked what is the single most valuable skill a baker can possess, interviewees gave mixed responses.

**Job task planning:** Bakers need to give consideration to what to promote and order and how much to produce. They need to be able to multi-task and organize their time well so that the right products are available at the right time.

**Oral Communication and Customer Service** – For many stores, this is the number one essential skill they insist on across the board. Bakers and cake decorators deal with the public to take custom orders and to answer questions about ingredients, prices, etc.

**Working with Others** – Bakers work in shifts, often handing off work from one group to the next. They need to coordinate to ensure efficient production.
Numeracy – In some stores, bakers are required to price items for payment at the main check-out. Customers may also ask bakers to help them estimate costs or required portions, or to convert weights between metric and imperial systems.

Training
All the stores interviewed provide on-the-job training for bakers and almost all of them provide formal or informal apprenticeship training. One store noted that a very inexperienced baker would be partnered with an experienced baker for at least one month. One of the larger chains has an in-house training program of 2,080 hours and this is followed by an in-house test. Bakers can choose to take the test for formal journeyman status, but this is not required by the employer. A couple of stores interviewed enroll their bakers in the apprenticeship program at Vancouver Island University (formerly Malaspina-University College). This involves attending classes in Nanaimo one month per year for three years. All expenses are covered by the employer.

Essential Skill Gaps
One interviewee suggested that bakers could use further training in the area of job task planning. Although only nine bakers responded to the employee survey, the results support this suggestion, as over half of respondents agreed that it is hard to manage their time due to frequent interruptions.

An instructor with the Vancouver Island University baker apprenticeship program indicated that essential skill deficits, particularly in the areas of reading, numeracy and problem solving, are sometimes a barrier to success in the program. The content of the apprenticeship program is specified by the Industry Training Authority and must be strictly adhered to in order to ensure consistency of content across Red Seal participating jurisdictions. The time allocated to delivering the baker apprenticeship training in B.C. is shorter than in other jurisdictions. In B.C., baker apprentices meet three times for a total of 12 weeks, while in many other jurisdictions delivering the same program, apprentices meet three times for a total of 24 weeks. The result is that there is no room in the existing B.C. curriculum to address essential skill gaps. The instructor with the apprenticeship program indicated that educators have more discretionary time to address essential skill issues in their entry level trades-training programs than in the apprenticeship program.

The job of baker in the grocery retail sector is substantially different in terms of skill requirements than in a traditional bakery. The CFIC has undertaken an extensive consultation process to develop National Occupation Standards (NOS) for the baker profession in the grocery sector. Part of the motivation for this undertaking was that the industry felt that existing apprenticeship programs were not reflective of the occupation as it is represented in the grocery retail sector, and developed a much higher level of skill than was required for in-store bakers (i.e. with par-baking vs. baking from scratch). The Baking Association Education Committee has been working with the Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers to develop an in-store baking apprenticeship curriculum that is customized to the particular skill requirements of the grocery retail setting.


12 Discussion with Martin Barnett, Instructor/Chair, Professional Baking Department, Culinary Institute of Vancouver Island University, Malaspina Campus on June 24, 2008.
BAKERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

BAKERS AS PERCENTAGE OF ALL SALES AND SERVICE OCCUPATIONS IN B.C. GROCERY STORES

Gender Distribution,
Grocery store bakers in B.C.

- Male: 41%
- Female: 59%

Highest Level of Educational Attainment,
Grocery store bakers in B.C.

- Less than high school: 19%
- High school graduation certificate or equivalent: 42%
- Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma: 16%
- College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma: 14%
- University certificate or diploma below bachelor's degree: 4%
- University certificate, diploma or degree: 5%

Full Time / Part Time,
Grocery store bakers in B.C.

- Full-time: 61%
- Part-time: 39%

Full-Time / Part-Time, By Age Group,
Grocery store bakers in B.C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>% Part-Time</th>
<th>% Full-Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Canada, custom tabulation from the 2006 Census.
BAKERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

NUMBER OF GROCERY STORE BAKERS BY AGE GROUP, B.C.

MEDIAN SALARY FOR RETAIL SALES OCCUPATIONS IN GROCERY STORES, B.C., 2005

MEDIAN EMPLOYMENT INCOME,
Grocery store bakers in B.C., 2005

Worked mostly full-time: $26,630
Worked mostly part-time: $8,251
All bakers: $19,970

Note: Full-time is defined as 30 hours or more per week
Part-time is defined as 1 to 29 hours per week

Source: Statistics Canada, custom tabulation from the 2006 Census.
### Essential Skill: Reading

I can read and understand information about price changes, sales and special events.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Strongly Agree:** 56%
- **Agree:** 44%
- **Neutral:** 0%
- **Disagree:** 0%
- **Strongly Disagree:** 0%

### Essential Skill: Oral Communication

I am good at listening to customers and suggesting the best product to fit their needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Strongly Agree:** 67%
- **Agree:** 33%
- **Neutral:** 0%
- **Disagree:** 0%
- **Strongly Disagree:** 0%

### Essential Skill: Oral Communication

When I talk to co-workers about how many cake bases or other products are needed to maintain the flow of production, I get the information I need quickly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td></td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Strongly Agree:** 0%
- **Agree:** 56%
- **Neutral:** 44%
- **Disagree:** 0%
- **Strongly Disagree:** 0%

### Essential Skill: Thinking - Job Task Planning

It is hard to manage my time because of frequent interruptions (for example, price checks, customer questions, equipment breakdowns, changing priorities, etc.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Strongly Agree:** 22%
- **Agree:** 33%
- **Neutral:** 22%
- **Disagree:** 22%
- **Strongly Disagree:** 0%

Note: Cake decorators are included with Bakers.
Essential Skill: Thinking - Problem Solving

When the icing or dough I am making is not the expected consistency, I can always figure out what went wrong and how I should try to fix it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Baker Scores on Document Use and Numeracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Baker Score</th>
<th>Overall Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Document Use</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numeracy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 - time</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 - multiplication</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 - currency</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=8 n=315

Note: Cake decorators are included with Bakers.
Sales Clerks – NOC 6421

Introduction
Sales clerks are one of the retail grocery occupations with the greatest range of essential skills requirements. Next to cashiers, sales clerks are likely the occupation that customers will most often interact with. As a result, good customer service by sales clerks is critical to a store’s performance in the eyes of the public.

Good product knowledge and the ability to help customers choose the product that will best meet their needs is also important; creativity and plant knowledge are added assets for floral clerks. Safety and hygiene requirements are also significant in a sales clerk’s job because non-adherence to these carries significant risks for the health of the customer, the safety of the department team and the reputation of the store. Finally, sales clerks must be able to work together as a team, to think and plan, and to organize their work so that the department operates in a seamless way resulting in products and presentation that meet the customer’s needs.

A summary of key findings for the Sales Clerk occupation is presented in the box below.

Key Interview and Employee Survey Findings – Sales Clerks
Sales clerks are a key position in a store’s public face. Successful sales clerks must have both good people skills and good technical skills.

Most valuable skills in the B.C. grocery context, as identified by interviewees:
- oral communication
- working with others
- thinking, continuous learning, and document use
- numeracy
- creativity (floral clerks)

Training
- on-the-job
- product knowledge training is sometimes available from suppliers
- training focuses on oral communication and customer service, product and process knowledge, safety and hygiene, and document use.

Essential skill gaps
- **Job Task Planning and Organizing** – planning work and coordinating with other team members to maintain efficient work flow in the department.
- **Computer Skills** – Familiarity and competency with computers and on-line processes to support inventory functions.
- **Document Use** – Only 62 percent of sales clerks provided the correct answer to the Level Two document use question, compared to 79 percent of all employees.
Profile in Brief
There are 8,025 sales clerks working in B.C. grocery stores. This represents just under one fifth (18%) of all sales and service employees working in B.C. grocery stores. Approximately three-quarters (71%) of sales clerks are female and 55 percent work part-time. Almost three-quarters of sales clerks have a high school education or less, and close to half (42%) are under the age of 25. A four-page statistical profile is provided at the end of the sales clerk section.

Duties
The duties identified by HRSDC for sales clerks, and by CFIC for floral clerks, were reviewed with grocery managers to obtain an updated picture of typical duties in the B.C. grocery context. Almost all the managers we interviewed said that sales clerks in their stores do not handle any cash or payments. As well, sales clerks in many of the stores do not estimate or quote prices or credit terms or conduct sales transactions through Internet commerce, and do not operate computerized inventory. In at least one store, this last function is the responsibility of a scanning clerk or file maintenance clerk. An additional duty for sales clerks in at least one store is to ensure proper hygiene and to carry out checks for Food Safe and Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP). Preparation of merchandise for purchase may include slicing meat, or even cooking a roast in the case of deli clerks. Some of the stores interviewed do not have floral departments (or this department is subcontracted to an outside operator).

List of Sales Clerk Duties – B.C. Grocery Sector

- Greet customers and discuss type, quality and quantity of merchandise or services sought for purchase;
- Advise customers on use and care of merchandise, and provide advice concerning specialized products or services;
- Prepare merchandise for purchase;
- Assist in display of merchandise;
- Maintain work areas to meet safety and hygiene requirements;
- May estimate or quote prices, credit terms, trade-in allowances, warranties and delivery dates;
- May accept cash, cheque, credit card or automatic debit payment;
- May maintain sales records for inventory control;
- May operate computerized inventory record keeping and re-ordering systems; and
- May conduct sales transactions through Internet-based electronic commerce.

Most important essential skills for Sales Clerks

1. Oral communication
2. Finding information
3. Working with others
4. Continuous learning

Source: HRSDC
List of Floral Clerk Duties – B.C. Grocery Sector

- Maintain a floral department;
- Greet and build a rapport with customers;
- Suggest floral arrangements and gift baskets for customers;
- Provide advice for and information about cut flowers and perennials, and seasonal items such as bedding plants and bulbs;
- Process deliveries of fresh cut flowers, plants and other floral department products;
- Create merchandising displays;
- Maintain floral departments by keeping displays full, cleaning debris, watering plants and removing distressed flowers, leaves, etc.;
- Arrange deliveries of purchased floral items (may also make the deliveries);
- Maintain work areas to meet safety requirements;
- May prepare floral arrangements and gift baskets (which may include fruits); and
- May receive and give back change and process credit and debit purchases.

Educational Requirements and Pre-screening
Although some managers indicated that they would prefer grade 10 or even grade 12, the majority of stores had no educational requirements for sales clerks. None of the stores required sales clerks to have experience and the general consensus was that if the person wanted to work and could multi-task, the rest of the job could be learned through on-the-job training. Those stores that employ floral clerks stated that design experience or training is a plus but they do not require it. Floral clerk applicants are assessed in the interview for their creativity and general interest in flowers and plants.

Most Valuable Skill
When asked what is the single most valuable skill a sales clerk can possess, oral communication skills, particularly as they relate to customer service, were mentioned most often. Sales clerks must be able to interact with the public, to greet them, discuss and fill their requests, take messages, etc. Sales clerks are one of the positions that customers interact with most and as such, it is essential that they present a friendly, helpful, and competent face for the store. Other skills considered valuable to sales clerks by interviewees are:

**Working with Others** – Sales clerks are often part of a team and must be able to work effectively together to provide efficient, seamless service to the customer. In many cases, sales clerks in one shift may be required to prepare merchandise for sale during the next shift. Team members must be able to communicate their needs to each other and work together to ensure work flows smoothly.

**Thinking, Continuous Learning and Document Use** - All of these play a role in the work of sales clerks. In some stores, sales clerks are required to follow a ‘blueprint’ of where stock should go. Stock and the blueprint are always changing and the sales clerks must be able to read, interpret and apply these changes. In addition, sales clerks are frequently asked by customers for assistance in selecting the right type, quality and quantity of merchandise to meet their particular need. These
needs vary widely depending on the season, the event, customer demographics, etc. Sales clerks must also be able to read, interpret and apply hygiene and safety documentation.

**Numeracy** – In stores where sales clerks carry out pricing, payment, and inventory functions, numeracy is also a key essential skill.

**Creativity** – Artistic ability is a valuable skill for floral clerks, particularly in stores where they are required to do floral arrangements or create displays.

**Training**

All of the stores in this study provided on-the-job training to sales clerks. A large percentage of this training relates to product knowledge and processes (including hygiene and safety requirements). New employee training is typically delivered by the department manager or a senior employee designated as the trainer. All stores also ensure that all sales clerks who handle food have completed the Level I Food Safe course. Product training may also be provided by wholesale suppliers, either at the store or off-site. Orientation training for new employees also includes a large component on customer service and communication; for example, telephone answering skills, how to handle complaints, etc. In stores where sales clerks perform pricing and payment functions, these are included in introductory on-the-job training. Training for new sales clerks also includes document use, such as how to complete forms, fill out log sheets, etc.

Most stores use checklists for sales clerks in departments where hygiene and safety standards must be maintained. In addition, stores frequently use “Communication Books” in departments. These books are a place where updates, new product information, new policies and standards, customer feedback, department and employee successes, etc., are recorded for all to read. Sales clerks and other employees are required to read new entries when they come on shift and may also be required to sign that they have done so.

Most stores do not provide design training for floral clerks, however, one store is developing training specifically for floral clerks.

**Essential Skill Gaps**

Interviewees cited the following as places where training in essential skills could improve the performance of sales clerks:

- **Job Task Planning and Organizing** – These skills are important to a sales clerk’s ability to work with others and maintain efficient work flow in the department. Managers told us that training to develop these essential skills is hard to find. The results of the employee survey lend support to this, with 52 percent of the 21 sales clerks respondents agreeing that it is hard to manage their time due to frequent interruptions.

- **Computer Skills** – For stores where sales clerks perform inventory functions, familiarity and competency with computers is becoming an essential skill. Some stores identified training in this area as a major deficiency in the retail grocery sector.

- **Document Use** – Only 62 percent of sales clerks provided the correct answer to the Level Two document use question, compared to 79 percent of all employees.
SALES CLERKS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

SALES CLERKS AS PERCENTAGE OF ALL SALES AND SERVICE OCCUPATIONS IN B.C. GROCERY STORES

GENDER DISTRIBUTION, Grocery store sales clerks in B.C.

Male, 29%
Female, 71%

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, Grocery store sales clerks in B.C.

Less than high school 26%
High school graduation certificate or equivalent 46%
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma 5%
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma 12%
University certificate or diploma below bachelor's degree 3%
University certificate, diploma or degree 7%

FULL TIME / PART TIME, Grocery store sales clerks in B.C.

Full-time, 45%
Part-time, 55%

FULL-TIME / PART-TIME, BY AGE GROUP, Grocery store sales clerks in B.C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>% Part-time</th>
<th>% Full-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Canada, custom tabulation from the 2006 Census.
SALES CLERKS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

NUMBER OF GROCERY STORE SALES CLERKS, BY AGE GROUP, B.C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Number of Clerks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 - 24 years</td>
<td>3,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 34 years</td>
<td>1,180</td>
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<tr>
<td>35 - 44 years</td>
<td>1,285</td>
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<tr>
<td>45 - 54 years</td>
<td>1,370</td>
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<tr>
<td>55 - 64 years</td>
<td>675</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 years and over</td>
<td>115</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Total sales clerks = 8,025

MEDIAN SALARY FOR RETAIL SALES OCCUPATIONS IN GROCERY STORES, B.C., 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Median Salary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>$35,096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat cutters</td>
<td>$25,081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakers</td>
<td>$19,970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales clerks</td>
<td>$11,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cashiers</td>
<td>$10,294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks and shelf stockers</td>
<td>$9,510</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MEDIAN EMPLOYMENT INCOME,
Grocery store sales clerks in B.C., 2005

- Worked mostly full-time: $20,799
- Worked mostly part-time: $6,445
- All sales clerks: $11,198

Note: Full-time is defined as 30 hours or more per week
Part-time is defined as 1 to 29 hours per week

Source: Statistics Canada, custom tabulation from the 2006 Census.
SALES CLERKS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: SURVEY RESULTS
n=21

**Essential Skill: Reading**
I can read and understand information about price changes, sales and special events.

- Strongly Agree: 67%
- Agree: 24%
- Neutral: 5%
- Disagree: 0%
- Strongly Disagree: 5%

**Essential Skill: Oral Communication**
When a customer is upset about a product or service, I can help them at least 80 percent of the time.

- Strongly Agree: 60%
- Agree: 40%
- Neutral: 0%
- Disagree: 0%
- Strongly Disagree: 0%

**Essential Skill: Continuous Learning**
I know a lot about the product I sell and I am always learning more.

- Strongly Agree: 43%
- Agree: 33%
- Neutral: 10%
- Disagree: 10%
- Strongly Disagree: 5%

**Essential Skill: Thinking - Job Task Planning**
It is hard to manage my time because of frequent interruptions (for example, price checks, customer questions, equipment breakdowns, changing priorities, etc.).

- Strongly Agree: 19%
- Agree: 33%
- Neutral: 19%
- Disagree: 14%
- Strongly Disagree: 14%
SALES CLERKS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: SURVEY RESULTS
n=21

Essential Skill: Working with Others
When I have been unsure about how to perform certain tasks, other workers or my supervisor have helped me.

Sales Clerk Scores on Document Use and Numeracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sales Clerk Score</th>
<th>Overall Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Document Use</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Numeracy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 - time</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 - multiplication</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 - currency</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=21 n=315
**Cashiers – NOC 6611**

**Introduction**
As competition increases in the grocery retail sector, cashiers are playing a critical role in ensuring that customers are satisfied. Several grocery managers referenced the fact that cashiers are the last contact a customer has with the grocery store before leaving. For this reason, customer service skills are key to success in this role.

A summary of key findings for the Cashier occupation is presented in the box below.

---

**Key Interview and Employee Survey Findings - Cashiers**
Cashiers are the last person to serve the customer; they make the impression that stays with customers and their oral communication skills are therefore very important.

Most valuable skills in the B.C. grocery context, as identified by interviewees:
- oral communication
- numeracy and problem solving
- memory
- continuous learning

Training
- in house and on-the-job
- the amount of training varies substantially by organization
- training focuses on oral communication, numeracy, and memory

Essential skill gaps
- **Numeracy**: Difficulty counting back change. Difficulty handling mixed forms of payment.
- **Problem Solving**: Lack of assessing reasonableness of “answer” provided by the cash register.
- **Oral Communication**: Difficulty with English.
- **Document Use**: Cashiers scored below the overall average on the employee survey on the Level Two document use question.

---

**Profile in Brief**
There are 13,330 cashiers working in B.C. grocery stores. This represents almost a third (30%) of all sales and service employees working in B.C. grocery stores. Cashiers are predominately female (89%) and over 60 percent work part-time. Three-quarters of cashiers have a high school education or less and close to half (46%) are under the age of 25. A four-page statistical profile is provided at the end of the cashier section.

**Most important essential skills for cashiers**
1. Document use
2. Numeracy
3. Oral communication
4. Memory

Source: HRSDC
Duties
The duties identified by HRSDC for cashiers were reviewed with grocery managers to obtain an updated picture of typical cashier duties in the B.C. grocery context. Some stores do not require cashiers to calculate total payments and reconcile at the end of the shift. This function is performed by head-office or a separate team of workers in some B.C. grocery stores. Many cashiers do not need to be able to calculate foreign currency because cash registers are equipped to do this for them. Finally, some stores indicated that cashiers do not assist with stocking shelves. Added to the list was the requirement for cashiers to maintain the cleanliness and workplace safety of their own work area.

List of Cashier Duties – B.C. Grocery Sector

- Greet customers;
- Establish or identify price of goods, services or admission and tabulate total payment required using electronic or other cash register, optical price scanner or other equipment;
- Weigh produce and bulk foods;
- Receive and process payments by cash, cheque, credit card or automatic debit;
- Wrap or place merchandise in bags;
- Provide information to customers;
- Calculate foreign currency exchange;
- Calculate total payments received at end of work shift and reconcile with total sales;
- Maintain work areas to meet safety requirements and clean check-out area; and
- May also stock shelves.

Educational Requirements and Pre-screening
While some managers indicated that they would prefer grade 12 graduation, none of the stores insisted on a particular academic standard for cashiers. There was consensus from all stores interviewed that the qualities that are particularly sought-after in a cashier are confidence and an out-going and friendly nature. Some managers also prefer cashiers to have previous work experience in a retail environment.

Most Valuable Skill
When asked what is the single most valuable skill a cashier can possess, oral communication skills were the most commonly mentioned skill. Other skills considered valuable to cashiers by interviewees, along with examples of why they are valuable, are provided below.

Memory – Memory is important because cashiers must be able to recall produce codes and associated prices in order to process customer orders efficiently.

Numeracy and problem solving - While modern cash registers reduce the need for advanced numeracy skills, cashiers need to apply thinking skills in order to judge reasonableness and identify when they have made a data entry error. For instance, they need to recognize when they are giving an amount of change that is out-of-line with the total bill. They also need to be able to handle mixed forms of payment, such as extra cash on a debit card transaction.
Continuous learning – systems are constantly changing, as are produce codes, and cashiers need to be able to continuously adapt and learn.

Training
Training of cashiers is performed in-house and in all cases takes the form of on-the-job training. Most stores use a buddy-system where a new cashier is partnered with a supervisor or experienced cashier for training purposes. The extent of training provided varies significantly by organization. One of the larger chains in the study provides 20 hours of training to a cashier before they serve a customer. That training begins in a group format at a practice till where cashiers learn to operate the till, count back change, and receive codes training. When the initial training is complete, the cashiers shadow an experienced cashier who has received trainer training for the final hours of the training phase. This relatively intensive training plan is contrasted with the approach of some smaller organizations, where cashiers begin serving customers almost immediately, with an experienced cashier coaching and providing guidance as necessary.

Some of the specific activities included in training that address essential skills include:

- **Memory** – regular review of new produce and tests to ensure they can be accurately identified by cashiers. If the produce can be identified by name, cashiers do not need to memorize the code because they can look it up.

- **Numeracy** – practice counting back change using play money.

- **Oral communication** – customer service training includes how to greet and interact with customers, as well as how to handle customer complaints. Language training is provided by some grocery organizations or unions to workers who do not speak the language of the majority of customers.

Essential Skill Gaps
There were a few areas identified by interviewees where essential skill gaps may be impacting cashier performance.

- **Numeracy**: Some cashiers have difficulty counting back change and this lack of skill in numeracy results in a failure to balance. Some also have difficulty performing transactions with mixed forms of payment, such as extra cash on a debit transaction.

- **Problem Solving**: A deficiency in thinking or problem solving skills results in some cashiers accepting the “answer” provided by the cash register without considering reasonableness.

- **Oral Communication**: Cashiers who do not speak the language may have difficulty achieving the level of skill required in oral communications to provide the expected standard of customer service.

- **Document Use**: Cashiers scored below the overall average on the employee survey on the Level Two document use question. Seventy-one percent of the 41 cashier-respondents got the answer correct, compared to 79 percent for all respondents.
CASHIERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

CASHIERS AS PERCENTAGE OF ALL SALES AND SERVICE OCCUPATIONS IN B.C. GROCERY STORES

Gender Distribution, Grocery store cashiers in B.C.

Full-time, 38%
Part-time, 62%

Highest Level of Educational Attainment, Grocery store cashiers in B.C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational Level</th>
<th>% Part-time</th>
<th>% Full-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduation certificate or equivalent</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University certificate or diploma below bachelor's degree</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University certificate, diploma or degree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Full-time / Part-time, by age group, Grocery store cashiers in B.C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>% Part-time</th>
<th>% Full-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Canada, custom tabulation from the 2006 Census.
CASHIERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

NUMBER OF GROCERY STORE CASHIERS, BY AGE GROUP, B.C.

Total cashiers = 13,330

![Bar chart showing number of grocery store cashiers by age group, B.C.]

MEDIAN SALARY FOR RETAIL SALES OCCUPATIONS IN GROCERY STORES, B.C., 2005

![Bar chart showing median salaries for retail sales occupations in grocery stores, B.C., 2005]

MEDIAN EMPLOYMENT INCOME,
Grocery store cashiers in B.C., 2005

- Worked mostly full-time: $20,081
- Worked mostly part-time: $7,456
- All cashiers: $10,294

Note: Full-time is defined as 30 hours or more per week
Part-time is defined as 1 to 29 hours per week

Source: Statistics Canada, custom tabulation from the 2006 Census.
CASHIERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: SURVEY RESULTS

n=42

Essential Skill: Reading
I can read and understand information about price changes, sales and special events.

- Strongly Agree: 59%
- Agree: 39%
- Neutral: 2%
- Disagree: 0%
- Strongly Disagree: 0%

Essential Skill: Oral Communication
When a customer is upset about a product or service, I can help them at least 80 percent of the time.

- Strongly Agree: 56%
- Agree: 41%
- Neutral: 0%
- Disagree: 5%
- Strongly Disagree: 0%

Essential Skill: Oral Communication
When I talk to co-workers to get a price check or to confirm a code, I get the information I need quickly.

- Strongly Agree: 48%
- Agree: 36%
- Neutral: 10%
- Disagree: 7%
- Strongly Disagree: 0%

Essential Skill: Working with Others
When I have been unsure about how to perform certain tasks, other workers or my supervisor have helped me.

- Strongly Agree: 79%
- Agree: 21%
- Neutral: 0%
- Disagree: 0%
- Strongly Disagree: 0%
CASHIERS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: SURVEY RESULTS

n=42

Essential Skill: Thinking - Memory

I rarely have to look codes up because I have memorized them.

Cashier Scores on Document Use and Numeracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document Use</th>
<th>Cashier Score</th>
<th>Overall Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numeracy</th>
<th>Cashier Score</th>
<th>Overall Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 - time</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 - multiplication</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 - currency</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=41 n=315
Clerks - 6622

Introduction
The occupation of clerk in the grocery retail industry includes a wide range of functions such as bag clerk, grocery clerk, order filler, price clerk, produce clerk, shelf stocker, and courtesy counter worker. While the clerk position is typically seen as one requiring less interaction with the public and thus a fit for employees with less developed oral communication skills, the impact of this occupation on store success should not be overlooked. Some types of clerk positions involve significant customer interaction coupled with a sound knowledge of store products and locations. Most clerk positions require working with other occupations, such as cashiers, to deliver quick efficient service, and many require a strong ability to multi-task, organize and sequence work with frequent interruptions. Reading and numeracy are particularly essential for stock and price clerks.

A summary of key findings for the Clerks occupation is presented in the box below.

Key Interview and Employee Survey Findings - Clerks
This occupation utilizes a range of skills, depending on the type of clerk position. Some clerk positions are better suited for employees with less developed interpersonal and oral communication skills. However, other positions involve significant customer interaction and working with others. The ability to multi-task, organize and sequence work with frequent interruptions is essential for most clerk positions.

Most valuable skills in the B.C. grocery context, as identified by interviewees:

- oral communication
- thinking, job planning and organizing
- working with others
- reading

Training
- on-the-job
- combination of communication/customer service training and store product knowledge
- one-on-one coaching for individual essential skill gaps

Essential skill gaps
- **Reading and numeracy** deficiencies sometimes lead to products being incorrectly shelved.
- **Oral Communication**: Lack of familiarity with the English language sometimes causes clerks to miss the nuances of oral and written communications, resulting in greater demands on supervisors to answer employee questions and resolve problems with customers.
- **Document Use**: The document use score on the Level Two question for clerks was relatively low compared with the overall average on that question.
Profile in Brief
There are 12,575 clerks working in B.C. grocery stores. This is close to one-third (29%) of all sales and service employees working in B.C. grocery stores. Two-thirds (68%) of clerks are male; 61 percent work part-time. The majority (79%) have a high school education or less and over half (55%) are under the age of 25. A four-page statistical profile for this occupation is included at the end of the clerk section.

Duties
The duties identified by HRSDC for clerks were reviewed with grocery managers to obtain an updated picture of typical clerk duties in the B.C. grocery context. In one store, clerks do not perform pricing or computerized inventory functions; these are the work of a separate occupation called scanning/file maintenance clerk. Not all stores provide mail order service.

List of Clerk Duties – B.C. Grocery Sector
- Bag, box or parcel purchases for customers or for shipment or delivery to customers;
- Carry customers' purchases to parking lot and pack in vehicles;
- Unpack products received by store and count, weigh or sort items;
- Attach protective devices to products to protect against shoplifting;
- Stock shelves and display areas and keep stock clean and in order;
- Obtain articles for customers from shelf or stockroom;
- Direct customers to location of articles sought;
- May sweep aisles, dust display racks and perform other general cleaning duties;
- May operate cash register and computer for electronic commerce transactions;
- May use barcode scanning equipment to record incoming stock, verify pricing and maintain computerized stock inventory;
- May price items using stamp or stickers according to price list;
- Maintain work areas to meet safety requirements;
- May order stock; and
- May fill mail orders from warehouse stock.

Most important essential skills for Clerks
1. Oral communication
2. Job task planning and organizing

Source: HRSDC

Educational Requirements and Pre-screening
While some managers indicated that they would prefer grade 10 or even high school graduation, most stores have no educational requirements for clerks. Clerks are generally screened through an interview to ensure they have a positive attitude to work. Shy people are often placed in clerk positions because they carry a lesser requirement to interact with the public.
Most Valuable Skill

Despite the reduced need for public interaction, oral communication and customer service are still identified by most stores as the most valuable skills employees can bring to the clerk occupation. This is especially important for bag clerks and courtesy counter clerks where the duties typically involve more direct customer interaction than with some other clerk positions. Other skills considered valuable to clerks by interviewees are:

**Thinking, job task planning and organizing** - shelf stockers must sequence tasks to ensure products are always available to customers in the right places and in a pleasing presentation. This often takes place in an environment of frequent interruptions by customers or cashiers. Memory skills are important for clerks who must constantly know where items are located and what products the store carries. Store managers also told us clerks need to be able to multi-task and need to take initiative to assess what needs to be done and make it happen.

**Working with others** – Clerks work with cashiers to perform price checks, bag groceries and obtain merchandise for customers. They must be able to interact with other staff to provide efficient service for the customer.

**Reading** – Clerks must be able to read product labels to stock shelves properly and to locate products for customers. They must also be able to read and interpret price stickers.

Training

Training for clerks appears to be exclusively done on-the-job. One exception to this is where a store pays for a new clerk to obtain Level I Food Safe training off-site. New clerks receive the same generic orientation as other new employees (customer service, store policies and history, WCB training for new employees, etc.). Clerks would typically also receive on-the-job training on the range of products carried by the store, how to receive and display products, price tickets and UPC codes, how to load carts and bag groceries, etc. A new stock clerk would typically be ready to do some work alone by the third day of employment in the store.

Reading and numeracy skills are sometimes a problem for clerks. Most stores will work one-on-one with these employees to try to build the missing skills and some of the larger chains provide English as a Second Language (ESL) training to assist employees that need it. This is not always possible for smaller stores, however, where the solution is more likely to be moving the employee to a less demanding position (e.g., night shifts) or letting the employee go.

Essential Skill Gaps

Some areas identified by interviewees where essential skill gaps may be impacting the performance of clerks are the following:

- **Reading and Numeracy**: One store noted that a lack of reading and numeracy skills prevents some clerks from stocking shelves correctly. When clerks compensate by using pictures on can labels to identify products, products get shelved in the wrong places.

- **Oral Communication**: Poor communication skills, particularly English language difficulties, sometimes result in clerks missing the nuances of requests, instructions and product information.
This creates extra mentoring requirements for supervisors and greater demands for supervisors to answer customer questions.

- **Document Use:** A total of 47 clerks responded to the survey and 69 percent provided a correct answer to the Level Two document use question. The overall percentage correct on this question was 79 percent.
CLERKS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

CLERKS AS PERCENTAGE OF ALL SALES AND SERVICE OCCUPATIONS IN B.C. GROCERY STORES

GENDER DISTRIBUTION, Grocery store clerks in B.C.

Male, 68%
Female, 32%

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, Grocery store clerks in B.C.

Less than high school 29%
High school graduation certificate or equivalent 50%
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma 4%
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma 8%
University certificate or diploma below bachelor’s degree 3%
University certificate, diploma or degree 6%

FULL TIME / PART TIME, Grocery store clerks in B.C.

FULL-TIME / PART-TIME, BY AGE GROUP, Grocery store clerks in B.C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>% Part Time</th>
<th>% Full Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics Canada, custom tabulation from the 2006 Census.
CLERKS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

NUMBER OF GROCERY STORE CLERKS, BY AGE GROUP, B.C.

Total clerks = 12,575

MEDIAN SALARY FOR RETAIL SALES OCCUPATIONS IN GROCERY STORES, B.C., 2005

MEDIAN EMPLOYMENT INCOME, Grocery store clerks in B.C., 2005

Worked mostly full-time: $21,092
Worked mostly part-time: $6,349
All clerks: $9,510

Note: Full-time is defined as 30 hours or more per week
Part-time is defined as 1 to 29 hours per week

Source: Statistics Canada, custom tabulation from the 2006 Census.
CLERKS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: SURVEY RESULTS
n=47

Essential Skill: Reading
I can read and understand information about price changes, sales and special events.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Essential Skill: Oral Communication
When a customer is upset about a product or service, I can help them at least 80 percent of the time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Essential Skill: Working with Others
When I have been unsure about how to perform certain tasks, other workers or my supervisor have helped me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Essential Skill: Thinking - Job Task Planning
It is hard to manage my time because of frequent interruptions (for example, price checks, customer questions, equipment breakdowns, changing priorities, etc.).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CLERKS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: SURVEY RESULTS

n=47

Essential Skill: Thinking - Memory

I am good at letting customers know where they can find things because I know the contents of each aisle by memory.

Clerk Scores on Document Use and Numeracy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Clerk</th>
<th>Overall Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Document Use</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Numeracy</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 - time</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1 - multiplication</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2 - currency</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n=45 n=315
### 4. RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING SKILL GAPS

Table 12 shows, for each of the six occupations, the essential skills identified in the appropriate profile as important to that occupation and the essential skills where potential skill gaps were identified through this research. In some cases the gaps are in areas identified as important and in other cases they are not. It should be noted that HRSDC profiles for the three lower skill occupations, sales clerks, cashiers and clerks, are becoming out-dated as these were the first occupations profiled. As such, all gaps warrant further consideration, regardless of whether they are in an area identified as important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions</th>
<th>Essential skills identified as most important by HRSDC or CFIC</th>
<th>Areas identified as potential skill gaps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Store Supervisors and Head Cashiers | Oral communication  
Problem solving  
Decision making  
Working with others | Oral communication  
Job task planning & organizing  
Numeracy  
Computer skills |
| Meat Cutters               | Document use  
Working with others  
Oral communication | Document use |
| Bakers                    | Job task planning & organizing  
Oral communication  
Decision making  
Reading text | Job task planning & organizing  
Reading text  
Numeracy |
| Sales Clerks              | Oral communication  
Finding information  
Working with others  
Continuous learning | Document use  
Computer skills  
Job task planning & organizing |
| Cashiers                  | Document use  
Numeracy  
Oral communication  
Memory | Document use  
Numeracy  
Oral communication  
Problem solving |
| Clerks                    | Oral communication  
Job task planning & organizing | Oral communication  
Reading  
Numeracy  
Document use |
In formulating a response to the essential skill gaps identified above, it is important to keep in mind some key overall lessons stemming from this research.

1. **Competition is High and Growing**
   Competition in the industry is intense and it is growing as the rate of sales growth in B.C. begins to align with the slower rates seen elsewhere in the country. Staff training will become increasingly important as stellar customer service is seen as a key means of differentiating the service package offered by one grocery store from the others.

2. **Customer Service is Job One**
   Of all the essential skills, the one that was mentioned repeatedly as key for all employees in this industry is Oral Communication. Employees need to be able to interact with the public in a positive and helpful manner and leave an excellent impression on all customers.

3. **Training Formality and Intensity Varies by Size**
   A lesson that has come through very clearly in this research is that larger grocery organizations have a great deal more resources at their disposal to address training needs than do smaller organizations. While all organizations are doing something to address training needs, the degree of formality and intensity of the approach increases with the size of the organization.

4. **On-the-job is Right for Retail**
   Across stores and occupations, the predominant delivery method for training in the retail grocery sector is on-the-job. This reflects the fact that retail hours are long and it is not practical or cost-effective to send staff off-site for training.

4.1 **Proposal for a Grocery Retail Essential Skills Project**
   An industry partner, such as the Canadian Food Industry Council, is critical to the success of future work on essential skills in the grocery retail sector. The CFIC’s history, background, interest and moral suasion with the industry, would make it an ideal partner in future work. Interviewees from both large and small organizations mentioned the value of the CFIC’s work, making it clear that this organization is held in very high regard by grocers in the province.

   As discussed in Chapter 1 of this report, several issues encountered in the implementation of this study almost certainly affect our ability to confidently generalize the results to the B.C. grocery retail sector. This study provides a foundation for future work by enhancing our understanding of the industry, its workers, and the training currently provided. However, the results are not sufficiently robust to provide a platform for curriculum development.

   Prior to developing a concrete intervention strategy, a first step would therefore be to validate the results of this study through an enhanced approach that would include industry-wide participation and a more thorough analysis of employee essential skills (e.g., TOEWS assessments). The objective of this step would be to validate the findings of this study with respect to the most important essential skills for each of the six occupations and the skill gaps. This would provide valuable input to curriculum development.
Having confirmed the findings of this study, the recommended strategy for addressing skill gaps would embrace the industry’s tradition of on-the-job training in the workplace, but add elements of structure and formality both to how and what is delivered. What is recommended is the development of a **generic training package** that would be made available to all grocery retail organizations in B.C., but the audience most likely to benefit from the package would be **independents**, which tend to have fewer in-house resources to devote to the development of formal training.

Drawing on the practice used successfully by one of our interviewees and recommended by the CFIC in their *Creating the Future Update* report, the mode of delivery for the package would adopt a **train-the-trainer approach** – designated people in each organization would be given training on how to customize and deliver the training package in their own workplace. This distributed model of training delivery has the advantage of increasing coverage and also dispersing training skills throughout the workforce.

The scope of the package would cover **all six of the occupations** included in this project. The **essential skill curriculum would be embedded** in the content for each occupation, with grocery specific examples and applications. For instance, rather than have a section on numeracy for cashiers, the cashier module might have a section on counting back change and dealing with mixed forms of payment, with the key numeracy skills reinforced through appropriate exercises. As a further example, the supervisor module, would have a strong focus on conflict resolution skills and would target Level Three oral communication skills that have been identified as critical to that role.

The grocery industry is concerned about generic approaches to training that could lead to valuable time being spent training for skills that an employee already has. For this reason, we propose that the training package include an **essential skills assessment tool** for each occupation. Trainers would use this tool to identify areas to emphasize and de-emphasize for a particular trainee. The tool could also be used with existing employees to identify where additional support may be required.

We have learned from the implementation of this relatively small study that this is a busy industry that requires substantial lead time to free up resources to participate in research studies. It will be important for this project to have a relatively generous time allocation to permit appropriate consultations with the industry prior to development and implementation.

The value of this approach is that it is sensitive to the industry’s traditions and constraints. It harnesses a process that is already underway throughout the sector – on-the-job-training – and lends structure to that process. By embedding the essential skills curriculum in a program that is customized to the industry, the training achieves two goals. It shortens the time period to when an employee becomes productive in their grocery retail job and it helps to raise the overall level of essential skills in a segment of B.C.’s population with relatively little formal education. While the job-specific part of the training pertains to their current position, the essential skills focus will provide these employees with skills they will have throughout their careers, ultimately enriching their own lives and benefiting the B.C. economy.
5. APPENDIX A - DETAILED TABLES

Table 13. All Items Consumer Price Index (2002=100)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Canada</th>
<th>British Columbia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>91.3</td>
<td>93.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>92.9</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>95.4</td>
<td>96.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>97.8</td>
<td>97.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>102.8</td>
<td>102.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>104.7</td>
<td>104.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>107.0</td>
<td>106.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>109.1</td>
<td>108.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>111.5</td>
<td>110.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Total Sales (Current Dollars)</td>
<td>Total Sales (2002 Dollars)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canada (000s)</td>
<td>British Columbia (000s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>$46,774,019</td>
<td>$6,799,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>$47,786,414</td>
<td>$6,820,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>$49,657,179</td>
<td>$7,151,022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>$51,514,084</td>
<td>$7,625,549</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>$54,343,640</td>
<td>$8,133,544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>$56,874,068</td>
<td>$8,468,512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>$59,760,902</td>
<td>$8,940,706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>$62,196,282</td>
<td>$8,999,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>$63,764,704</td>
<td>$9,418,335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>$65,842,536</td>
<td>$9,889,988</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Sales data is a custom order from Statistics Canada's CANSIM table 080-0015, Retail Trade, sales by trade group, quarterly, for NAIC 44511, Supermarkets and Other Grocery.
### Table 15. Total Current Consumption and Food Expenditures, B.C. and Canada, 1998 to 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
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<td>1999</td>
<td>$36,984</td>
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<td>$39,811</td>
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<td>2003</td>
<td>$42,997</td>
<td>$43,589</td>
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<td>$44,678</td>
<td>$45,871</td>
<td>$42,672</td>
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<td>2005</td>
<td>$46,610</td>
<td>$50,103</td>
<td>$43,561</td>
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<td>2006</td>
<td>$48,765</td>
<td>$52,334</td>
<td>$44,698</td>
<td>$48,413</td>
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</table>

1. Expenditure data is a custom order from Statistics Canada’s CANSIM table 203-0001 - Survey of Household Spending (SHS), household spending, summary-level categories, by province, territory and selected metropolitan areas, and CANSIM table 203-0002 – Survey of Household Spending (SHS), household spending on food, by province and territory, annual.
2. Converted to 2002 dollars using the all-items Consumer Price Index (2002=100).
3. Household Consumption is the amount of expenses incurred during the reference year for food, shelter, household operations, household furnishings and equipment, clothing, transportation, health care, personal care, recreation, reading materials, education, tobacco products and alcoholic beverages, games of chance and miscellaneous groups of items.
4. Food expenditures refer to food purchased from stores.
Table 16. Gender Composition of Grocery Store Workforce, by Occupation, Canada and B.C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation NOCS</th>
<th>Canada Total - Sex</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>British Columbia Total - Sex</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>414,470</td>
<td>184,985</td>
<td>229,485</td>
<td>53,710</td>
<td>23,290</td>
<td>30,415</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Management occupations</td>
<td>46,720</td>
<td>28,035</td>
<td>18,680</td>
<td>5,550</td>
<td>3,700</td>
<td>1,845</td>
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<tr>
<td>B Business, finance and administrative occupations</td>
<td>19,915</td>
<td>7,735</td>
<td>12,180</td>
<td>2,160</td>
<td>805</td>
<td>1,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Natural and applied sciences and related occupations</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>1,085</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Sales and service occupations</td>
<td>334,615</td>
<td>140,180</td>
<td>194,435</td>
<td>43,795</td>
<td>17,490</td>
<td>26,305</td>
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<tr>
<td>G011 Retail trade supervisors</td>
<td>23,770</td>
<td>12,190</td>
<td>11,585</td>
<td>3,345</td>
<td>1,820</td>
<td>1,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G211 Retail salespersons and sales clerks</td>
<td>48,855</td>
<td>34,125</td>
<td>14,730</td>
<td>8,025</td>
<td>2,315</td>
<td>5,705</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G311 Cashiers</td>
<td>109,555</td>
<td>94,555</td>
<td>15,000</td>
<td>13,330</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>11,825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G412 Cooks</td>
<td>2,830</td>
<td>1,235</td>
<td>1,595</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G941 Butchers, meat cutters and fishmongers - retail and wholesale</td>
<td>16,150</td>
<td>12,235</td>
<td>3,915</td>
<td>2,240</td>
<td>1,495</td>
<td>745</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G942 Bakers</td>
<td>12,635</td>
<td>9,040</td>
<td>3,595</td>
<td>2,030</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>1,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G961 Food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related occupations</td>
<td>6,770</td>
<td>5,085</td>
<td>1,685</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>545</td>
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<tr>
<td>G972 Grocery clerks and store shelf stockers</td>
<td>105,460</td>
<td>29,945</td>
<td>75,515</td>
<td>12,575</td>
<td>8,560</td>
<td>4,010</td>
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<tr>
<td>H Trades, transport and equipment operators and related occupations</td>
<td>6,010</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>5,695</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>660</td>
<td>25</td>
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</table>

Source: Custom tabulation from the 2006 Census for 4451 – Grocery Stores.
Table 17. Work Arrangements, by Occupation in Grocery Store Industry, Canada and B.C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>27,795</td>
<td>24,585</td>
<td>1,325</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Management occupations</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>46,720</td>
<td>43,740</td>
<td>2,635</td>
<td>345</td>
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<td>260</td>
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<td></td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
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<td>1,565</td>
<td>575</td>
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<tr>
<td>C Natural and applied sciences and related occupations</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>1,600</td>
<td>1,490</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>285</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
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<td>G Sales and service occupations</td>
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<td>136,565</td>
<td>189,665</td>
<td>8,385</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>19,875</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Canada</td>
<td>23,770</td>
<td>19,190</td>
<td>4,385</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>3,345</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Canada</td>
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<td>19,235</td>
<td>28,405</td>
<td>1,215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>8,025</td>
<td>3,510</td>
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<td>G311 Cashiers</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>109,555</td>
<td>33,590</td>
<td>73,010</td>
<td>2,950</td>
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<tr>
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<td>13,330</td>
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<td>7,995</td>
<td>330</td>
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<tr>
<td>G412 Cooks</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2,830</td>
<td>1,755</td>
<td>995</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G941 Butchers, meat cutters and fishmongers - retail and wholesale</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>16,150</td>
<td>10,750</td>
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<td>2,240</td>
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<td>710</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>G961 Food counter attendants, kitchen helpers and related occupations</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>6,770</td>
<td>2,355</td>
<td>4,205</td>
<td>210</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>770</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G972 Grocery clerks and store shelf stockers</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>105,460</td>
<td>38,110</td>
<td>64,280</td>
<td>3,075</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Canada</td>
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<td>1,330</td>
<td>150</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Custom tabulation from the 2006 Census for 4451 – Grocery Stores
6. **APPENDIX B – GROCERY INTERVIEW GUIDE**

We will start with some background information about your grocery organization.

- How many grocery stores do you operate in B.C.?
- How many employees work in your stores?
- How many in head office?
- About what percentage of your total sales do you invest in training?

**Interview Guide for Occupation-Specific Questions**

The following questions will be asked for each of the occupations listed in Table 2 that you have in your stores. You may choose to group occupations in your response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions</th>
<th>NOC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Store Supervisors and Head Cashiers</td>
<td>6211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butchers – e.g., supermarket meat cutter</td>
<td>6251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakers – e.g., Head Baker or Baker Apprentice and cake decorators</td>
<td>6252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Clerks – e.g., sales staff at seafood, meat, deli, or bakery counters</td>
<td>6421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cashiers</td>
<td>6611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floral Clerk</td>
<td>6622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerks – e.g., bag clerk, grocery clerk, order filler, price clerk, produce clerk, shelf stocker, courtesy counter worker</td>
<td>6622</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Confirmation of draft list of duties for each occupation from Appendix 1.
2. What are the educational requirements for this occupation?
3. What type of pre-screening, if any, is done on applicants to this position?
4. If you were to name the single, most valuable skill an employee can bring to this occupation, what would it be?
5. What type of training is provided for a new employee in this position (on-the-job, classroom, web, etc.)
6. Who provides this training (if external provider, please provide name)
7. Does the training provided to employees address the Essential Skill areas that are most important to each occupation? Refer to Appendix 2 for a list of the most important Essential Skills in each occupation.

For instance, numeracy is important to cashiers, do you practice balancing during training?

May we please have copies of training materials so that we can take a look at how Essential Skills are addressed? We understand that these may be considered proprietary.
8. What barriers do you face when it comes to training?

9. What do you do if you discover a new employee is lacking in an Essential Skill? For instance, a new cashier is unable to read the flyer?

10. Have you ever had to let an employee go because of a lack of Essential Skills?

11. Demographics: what proportion of this occupation is male / female, level of education, age.

12. If training was available to assist employees who need help with Essential Skills, how would you want that training delivered (e.g., web, classroom, workbook, or a combination)?

13. Finally, what is your overall impression of the level of Essential Skills in your workforce relative to your requirements to be competitive in this industry?
7. APPENDIX C - EMPLOYEE SURVEY

Introduction

Dear Grocery Store Worker,

Thank you for your valuable input to this project to identify training needs in British Columbia’s grocery retail sector. This survey will take you between 5 and 10 minutes to complete. If you encounter any difficulties while completing the survey, please contact us at survey@grocerieskills.com

Sincerely,

Scott Maclnnis
Director Continuing Education and Contract Training
Camosun College

Click “Next” to get started with the survey.

Contact Information for iPod

Please enter your name and phone number. This information will be used by Camosun College to contact you in the event that you are one of the respondents who wins an iPod Touch.

Please remember your responses are confidential – your contact information will not be used for any other purpose.

1) Please enter your first and last name here.

2) Please provide a phone number.

Where you work and what you do

First we will ask some questions about where you work and your role at the grocery store.

3) For which of the following grocery stores do you work?

- 49th Parallel Grocery
- Canada Superstore
- Country Grocer
- Delmas Co-op
- Pemberton Valley Supermarket
- Peninsula Co-op
- Pepper’s Foods
- Real Canadian Superstore
- Thrifty Foods
4) How long have you been working in your current position?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 year to less than 2 years
- 2 years to less than 4 years
- 4 years or more

**Where you work and what you do**

5) Which one of the following best describes your position at the grocery store where you work? *Check one only.*

- Store supervisor / manager → 6-E
- Department supervisor / manager (e.g., deli supervisor, floral manager, seafood supervisor, etc.) → 6-E
- Meat cutter → 6-B
- Baker → 6-A
- Cake decorator → 6-A
- Head cashier → 6-E
- Cashier → 6-C
- Sales clerk at seafood, deli, bakery, or other counter → 6-D
- Clerk (includes bag clerk, grocery clerk, price clerk, produce clerk, shelf stocker, courtesy counter worker) → 6-F
- Floral clerk → 6-D
- Other, specify → 6-F

**Bakers and Cake Decorators**

Now we will ask some questions to identify key skills you use in your job.

Please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following questions.

6A) I can read and understand information about price changes, sales and special events.

   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Neither agree, nor disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree

7A) I am good at listening to customers and suggesting the best product to fit their needs.

   - Strongly agree
   - Agree
   - Neither agree, nor disagree
   - Disagree
   - Strongly disagree
8A) When the icing or dough I am making is not the expected consistency, I can always figure out what went wrong or how I should try to fix it.

   Strongly agree
   Agree
   Neither agree, nor disagree
   Disagree
   Strongly disagree

9A) It is hard to manage my time because of frequent interruptions (for example, price checks, customer questions, equipment breakdowns, changing priorities, etc.)

   Strongly agree
   Agree
   Neither agree, nor disagree
   Disagree
   Strongly disagree

10A) When I talk to co-workers about how many cake bases or other products are needed to maintain the flow of production, I get the information I need quickly.

   Strongly agree
   Agree
   Neither agree, nor disagree
   Disagree
   Strongly disagree

Continue with Q 11.

Meat cutters

Now we will ask some questions to identify key skills you use in your job.

Please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following questions.

6B) I can read and understand information about price changes, sales and special events.

   Strongly agree
   Agree
   Neither agree, nor disagree
   Disagree
   Strongly disagree

7B) I am good at listening to customers and suggesting the cut of meat that would best fit their needs.

   Strongly agree
Agree  
Neither agree, nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

8B) It is hard to manage my time because of frequent interruptions (for example, price checks, customer questions, equipment breakdowns, changing priorities, etc.)

   Strongly agree  
   Agree  
   Neither agree, nor disagree  
   Disagree  
   Strongly disagree

9B) When I have been unsure about how to do certain tasks, other workers or my supervisor have helped me.

   Strongly agree  
   Agree  
   Neither agree, nor disagree  
   Disagree  
   Strongly disagree

10B) When I talk to co-workers about which cuts to prepare first, I get the information I need quickly.

   Strongly agree  
   Agree  
   Neither agree, nor disagree  
   Disagree  
   Strongly disagree

Continue with Q 11.

Cashiers

Now we will ask some questions to identify key skills you use in your job.

Please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following questions.

6C) I can read and understand information about price changes, sales and special events.

   Strongly agree  
   Agree  
   Neither agree, nor disagree  
   Disagree  
   Strongly disagree

7C) When a customer is upset about a product or service, I can help them at last 80 percent of the time.
8C) I rarely have to look codes up because I have memorized them.

Strongly agree
Agree
Neither agree, nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree

9C) When I have been unsure about how to do certain tasks, other workers or my supervisor have helped me.

Strongly agree
Agree
Neither agree, nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree

10C) When I talk to co-workers to get a price check or to confirm a code, I get the information I need quickly.

Strongly agree
Agree
Neither agree, nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree

Continue with Q 11.

Sales Clerks and Floral Clerks

Now we will ask some questions to identify key skills you use in your job.

Please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following questions.

6D) I can read and understand information about price changes, sales and special events.

Strongly agree
Agree
Neither agree, nor disagree
Disagree
7D) When a customer is upset about a product or service, I can help them at least 80 percent of the time.

   Strongly agree
   Agree
   Neither agree, nor disagree
   Disagree
   Strongly disagree

8D) I know a lot about the product I sell and I am always learning more.

   Strongly agree
   Agree
   Neither agree, nor disagree
   Disagree
   Strongly disagree

9D) When I have been unsure about how to do certain tasks, other workers or my supervisor have helped me.

   Strongly agree
   Agree
   Neither agree, nor disagree
   Disagree
   Strongly disagree

10D) It is hard to manage my time because of frequent interruptions (for example, price checks, customer questions, equipment breakdowns, changing priorities, etc.)

   Strongly agree
   Agree
   Neither agree, nor disagree
   Disagree
   Strongly disagree

Continue with Q 11.

Store Supervisors, Head Cashiers and Department Supervisors

Now we will ask some questions to identify key skills you use in your job.

Please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following questions.

6E) I can read and understand information about price changes, sales and special events.

   Strongly agree
Agree  
Neither agree, nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

7E) When a customer is upset about a product or service, I can help them at last 80 percent of the time.

Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neither agree, nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

8E) Resolving conflicts between staff members is one of the most challenging parts of my job.

Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neither agree, nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

9E) When a cashier or other staff member makes an error, I always know how to fix it.

Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neither agree, nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

10E) It is hard to manage my time because of frequent interruptions (for example, price checks, customer questions, equipment breakdowns, changing priorities, etc.)

Strongly agree  
Agree  
Neither agree, nor disagree  
Disagree  
Strongly disagree

Continue with Q 11.

Clerks

Now we will ask some questions to identify key skills you use in your job.

Please tell us the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following questions.

6F) I can read and understand information about price changes, sales and special events.
Strongly agree
Agree
Neither agree, nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree

7F) When a customer is upset about a product or service, I can help them at least 80 percent of the time.

Strongly agree
Agree
Neither agree, nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree

8F) When I am unsure about how to do certain tasks, other workers or my supervisor have helped me.

Strongly agree
Agree
Neither agree, nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree

9F) I am good at letting customers know where to find things because I know the contents of each aisle by memory.

Strongly agree
Agree
Neither agree, nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree

10F) It is hard to manage my time because of frequent interruptions (for example, price checks, customer questions, equipment breakdowns, changing priorities, etc.)

Strongly agree
Agree
Neither agree, nor disagree
Disagree
Strongly disagree

Continue with Q 11.

**Essential Skills**
The next questions will help to provide us with an indication of the overall level of various essential skills in the retail grocery sector. Remember that your individual results will not be shared with anyone.
11. A customer’s grocery bill is $100.00 Cdn. They want to pay in American currency. If the exchange rate is $1.00 Cdn = $0.8865 American, how much does the customer owe in American currency?

Enter the amount the customer owes in American currency:

12. Your supervisor informs you that another cashier is delayed by two hours. She was originally scheduled to start her shift at 1:00 p.m.

What time can you expect her to arrive based on this information?

13. Your supervisor asks you to prepare packages of a dozen muffins, with three muffins in each row of the package. How many rows of muffins will there be in each package?

Enter the number of rows per package here:

14. What is the item number of the least expensive can opener?

Enter the item number in the box below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM NUMBER</th>
<th>ITEM NAME</th>
<th>PRICE ($)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bennett 9x9 Baking Pan</td>
<td>$6.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Alma 9X9 Baking Pan</td>
<td>$6.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bonita Mixing Utensils</td>
<td>$7.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Versha Ultra Stainless Whisk</td>
<td>$6.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>V3 100 cm Ruler</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Totto Plastic Gloves</td>
<td>$4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Versha Stainless Can Opener</td>
<td>$4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Bennett Deluxe Can Opener</td>
<td>$4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>BJ Smith Stainless Mixing Spoon</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Diaz Deluxe Wine Opener</td>
<td>$4.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Diaz Basic Wine Opener</td>
<td>$3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>BJ Smith Wooden Mixing Spoon</td>
<td>$2.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. What is the sale price for Moonlite dish detergent?

Enter the sale price for Moonlite dish detergent here:
Demographics
The last five questions are intended to give us an overall picture of who works in the grocery retail sector in British Columbia.

16. Are you male or female?

Male
Female

17. How old are you?

24 years or under
25-34 years
35-44 years
45-54 years
55-64 years
65 years and over

18. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?

Less than grade 12
High school graduation
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma
University certificate or diploma below bachelor’s degree
University degree
Masters degree, Doctorate degree, or degree in medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine or optometry
19. In a typical week, how many hours do you work at your grocery job?
   Fewer than 20 hours
   21-30 hours
   31-40 hours
   More than 40 hours

20. Are you currently attending school (high school, college or university) on either a full-time or a part-time basis?
   Yes
   No

Thanks!
Thank you for taking the time to complete the Grocery Retail Essential Skills Survey.
Click “Done” to exit the survey.