



supporting Labour Market Attachment

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition in the Workplace

Description:

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is a process which involves the use of a variety of assessment tools and methods to evaluate and distinguish the knowledge, skills and attitudes people have acquired through life and work experience. Once identified, this knowledge and skill can be recognized and rewarded.

This report has been written for individuals and organizations interested in the applications of PLAR in a workplace or industry setting.



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- Province of Manitoba, Industry Training Partnerships
- The Workplace Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Committee (WPLAR)

WPLAR is business, labour and government partnering to oversee workplace PLAR activities in Manitoba. WPLAR is responsible for implementing and marketing Manitoba's approach to industry-based PLAR. This includes researching best practice, guiding the development of PLAR workplace practitioners and supporting industry-based projects.

WPLAR Offers

Businesses interested in implementing PLAR activities in their workplace can access extensive research and information and a list of PLAR practitioners through WPLAR.

Funding for project initiatives will be cost-shared with industry, business, labour, accrediting bodies and government. WPLAR works with applicants to successfully implement PLAR in the workplace.

Funding applicants must illustrate a commitment to assume long-term ownership of PLAR, including sustainability plans to assess and review competencies.

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FOREWORD

The purpose of this report is to inform the reader about the practice of PLAR nationally and internationally as it relates to workplace-based practice in Manitoba.

- **What is PLAR?**

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is a process which involves the use of a variety of assessment tools and methods, to evaluate and distinguish the knowledge, skills and attitudes people have acquired through life and work experience. Once identified, this knowledge and skill can be recognized and rewarded.

- **Who is this report for?**

This report has been written for individuals and organizations interested in the applications of PLAR in a workplace or industry setting. 'Workplace' and 'industry', for the purposes of this report, are broadly defined to include groups that develop or support employees. We mean to include: businesses and employers, organized labour and employee groups, sector groups, industry associations, and certification and regulatory bodies.

- **A note about language**

The language used in this report is intended to be understood by business, labour, sectoral bodies and others that are familiar with a workplace or industry context. Because it is important that readers can 'see' themselves in the activities described, typical PLAR language has been adjusted to have similar meaning in a workplace environment. The terms 'standards' and 'competencies' are used interchangeably.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	
	• Purpose	1
	• Research process	1
	• Key findings	2
2.	Background	
	• Defining PLAR	3
	• Broader context	3
	• PLAR in Manitoba	4
	• The need for PLAR in the workplace	5
	• Labour force trends	
	• Training trends	
	• Uses of PLAR in the workplace	6
	• Creating a seamless learning system	7
3.	Towards an Integrated Workplace PLAR Process	
	• Creating a Manitoba process	8
	• Elements of good practice	8
4.	Manitoba Workplace PLAR Process	9
	• Identify organizational needs	10
	• Identify performance requirements	10
	• Design prior learning assessment methods	12
	• Assess prior learning against standards	13
	• Provide internal recognition	14
	• Provide external recognition	15
	• Identify performance gaps	15
	• Provide training	16
	• Evaluate learning results	16
5.	External Linkages	17
6.	The Challenge to Building Internal Workplace PLAR Capacity	19
7.	Appendix I: PLAR in Manitoba	A1
	Appendix II: The Canadian Context	A5
	Appendix III: International Models of PLAR	A12
	Appendix IV: References	A15
	Appendix V: Workforce Development Strategy Chart	A23
	Appendix VI: PLAR Terms	A25

WORKPLACE PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION THE MANITOBA REPORT 2002

1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This report was commissioned in late January 2002 to provide a general scan of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) practice, projects and issues that would serve as an information base to develop a process for applying PLAR in a workplace setting.

The research project focused on:

- viewing national and international models of PLAR
- identifying and relating current practices of PLAR to a potential workplace process model
- developing a potential Manitoba process to guide the workplace practice of PLAR and see how it works in concert with post-secondary institutions and community service providers
- assessing workplace capacity to offer PLAR services

Research Process

Comprehensive research into PLAR in Canada and beyond identified key concepts, language and approaches to the successful application of PLAR in a workplace setting.

The process included a literature review, a review of websites, and written and verbal interviews with individuals and organizations involved in PLAR.

Key Findings

- I. There is not an extensive, well-articulated practice of workplace PLAR. There is, however, a growing interest in and understanding of PLAR as a competency-based tool that an organization can use to meet identified workforce development needs.
- II. PLAR is a tool, not an end unto itself, and can be effective when applied to a well-defined need. The demand for use of a workplace PLAR system needs to be driven by the needs of the workplace.
- III. There are key components of the traditional PLAR model that can be applied or adapted to a workplace setting. These components are:
 - a commitment from all stakeholders to recognize prior learning
 - the use of competencies to define learning/training outcomes
 - the use of flexible assessment methods
 - the recognition of prior learning in all realms – education, community and workplace
 - the use of competencies to guide the assessment process
 - the use of competencies to define occupations/job descriptions/process
 - the use of subject-matter experts as assessors and mentors

The starting point for a workplace perspective on PLAR is therefore not “Let’s try PLAR. I wonder how we can use it?” but rather “What are the needs faced by the workplace and is PLAR the right tool to help answer these needs?”

2

BACKGROUND

Defining PLAR

PLAR is a process that recognizes that adults acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes through many means of formal and informal learning. A PLAR system evaluates this prior learning and provides recognition as it relates to a set of performance standards.

PLAR is used for different purposes in different environments. Environments include secondary and post-secondary institutions, certification and regulatory bodies, business and industry, labour groups, adult learning centers, and employment and career planning advisors. In some cases, PLAR is used for credit or advanced standing in courses or certification. In others, it is used to reduce training time. It may also be used for promotion, hiring or performance appraisal.

In short, PLAR is principally a means of translating and transferring the learning from a variety of experiences, and applying the learning towards a different environment.

The radical and revolutionary impact of PLAR occurs when one realizes that learning from all sources has the potential to be of value. PLAR could have a profound impact on workplaces in areas such as human resource management, training, performance management, process definition and development of a learning culture.

By building bridges between workplaces, educational institutions and industry-related organizations, a seamless learning system is created wherein non-institutional learning is valued.

Broader Context

The idea of recognizing prior learning is not new. The discussion of experiential learning began in North America during the 1930s. Soldiers returning from World War II provided an impetus for recognizing this form of learning, as much of the soldiers' technical expertise had not been gained in classrooms. Beginning in the 1970's, the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (Chicago), took a leadership role in promoting PLAR applications. In Canada, the concept of PLAR has expanded and interest has continued to grow over the last two decades.

In Canada, the level of PLAR activity varies from province to province. Most of the current activities are delivered through post-secondary institutions or are driven by national sector councils. The next highest level of activity is seen in the work of certification or regulatory bodies that are

beginning to set standards.

In general, there is very little PLAR activity in Canada directly related to the workplace.¹

Countries that are taking a leadership role in workplace PLAR include the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Finland, Ireland and France. The common element in these countries is that they all have national systems of occupational skill standards that are fully integrated into broader learning/education systems. These countries have negotiated skills standards with stakeholders, resulting in transparent and widely accepted systems for learning recognition.²

PLAR in Manitoba

To date, PLAR activities have focused on building capacity in post-secondary institutions and adult learning centers, and in funding workforce-related projects for sectors and regulatory bodies. These activities have included:

- community colleges and universities using PLAR to assist students to attain credit in existing programs
- adult learning centres and employment centres being trained to deliver PLAR services to clients
- industry-driven projects applying PLAR to assist employees in attaining certification and post-secondary education. Examples of these projects include Technicians and Technologists, Aboriginal Apprenticeship, and the Manitoba Tourism Education Council

In November 2001, the Government of Manitoba released *A New Policy Framework for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)* which proposes a strengthened, integrated approach to PLAR built on three cornerstones:

- increasing PLAR capacity in post-secondary institutions
- strengthening advisory services within the community, at adult learning centres and employment centres
- providing a greater focus on industry PLAR projects and their sustainability

The Need for

¹ Canadian PLAR activities are also outlined in Appendix 1.

² For more information on International PLAR activities please refer to Appendix 1, "PLAR Scan", at the back of this report.

PLAR in the Workplace

Education and training are becoming increasingly important in today's workplace. Traditionally, education is understood to be the teaching of general knowledge in formal institutions; training involves teaching information or procedures directly relevant to the performance of a particular set of tasks.

In today's economy, business and industry are pursuing both a higher knowledge base and greater skills for their workforce and in their workplace. Industry and adult learners are investing more in training and as a direct result, are demanding to know the relevance of their learning. A culture of learning in the workplace therefore blurs the lines between education, training and workplace experience.

Research indicates that, at best, workplace PLAR is in the early stages in Canada. There is no proven end-to-end process that can be directly applied to the workplace. Nonetheless, PLAR can play an important role. The process of defining, identifying and documenting prior learning is relevant and applicable in assisting workplaces to appreciate and utilize the knowledge and skills available to them in their workforce.

Consider the following issues:

I. Labour Force Trends

In 2001, The Conference Board of Canada forecasted a shortage of nearly one million skilled workers within 20 years.

The *Statistics Canada Labour Force Survey 2001* forecasted that immigration will account for all net labour force growth by 2011.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business reported in late 2000 that up to 300,000 jobs were vacant because of a lack of suitably skilled workers.

II. Training Trends

The Canadian Policy Research Network shows that:

- 70% of establishments, accounting for nearly 90% of all workers, reported undertaking some training in the past twelve months. Most was informal training, with the incidence of formal training being high in only some segments of the economy.

The recent Conference Board of Canada report *Training and Development Outlook 2001* stated:

- Highly-rated 'learning organizations' are almost 50% more likely to report better overall levels of profitability than are those that rate themselves less favourably.

A profile of Canadian adult learners, produced by The Office of Learning Technologies, estimates 5.8 million adults participate in some type of

training annually, with over 70% of these adults doing so for job or career reasons.

These trends show that PLAR as a workforce development process can help to address the workforce needs in Canada.

Uses of PLAR in the Workplace

A quality, well-implemented workplace PLAR system can offer many benefits to workplaces and related organizations. Such a system could be used to:

- define workplace competencies by process or occupation
- honour and recognize the value of informal learning, prior learning and workers' experiences
- build a learning culture by raising the profile of learning and training
- apply recognition of workplace skills to formal training and education credentials
- recognize and accredit skills of foreign-trained employees
- define training needs and develop appropriate responses
- evaluate the effectiveness of training and the return on training investment
- maintain comprehensive records of education, training, skills and experience
- respond to current and future skills and labour shortages
- adapt to fast-paced change and technological advancements
- implement performance standards by occupational group and/or process
- respond to external pressures for standards of training (such as the implementation of ISO training and process standards) through competency-based assessment³

³ See Appendix 3, A Workforce Development Strategy Chart, which details a list of potential applications of PLAR.

Creating a Seamless Learning System

PLAR can provide a way to look at integrating, documenting and valuing education and training in the workplace. It can also create links from workplaces to other work-related organizations and to educational institutions. Canadian adults have been using the educational system for many years to find new learning opportunities that have relevance to their working lives. PLAR legitimizes this practice.

At the same time, post-secondary institutions hope to work with industry partners to make their programs more attractive to more adults. They hope to make themselves more accessible by offering learners the opportunity to prove what they already know using PLAR, thereby shortcutting the process of completing a program. For the applicant, the attraction is the avoidance of duplication of learning, thus saving time.

Sector Councils have made many advancements in utilizing a PLAR approach to meet the labour development needs in their industry and encourage members to prove their learning towards the sector 'standards' of performance.

Certification and regulatory bodies are the keepers of the standards in their fields. They make use of PLAR in the hopes that both their members and professionals from other jurisdictions or countries can more quickly and effectively meet the qualifications of their designation. National standards help to ease inter-provincial labour mobility issues.

Secondary schools, adult learning centres and employment support agencies use the philosophy of PLAR to help their students and clients to identify and articulate what they already know. This is done with the hopes of translating prior learning into high school credits, or for achieving recognition of prior learning as it applies to employment or re-training goals.

By creating links between these different organizations, workplace learning becomes even more portable and valuable.

3

TOWARDS AN INTEGRATED WORKPLACE PLAR PROCESS

Creating a Manitoba Process

To develop a seamless PLAR system in Manitoba, we need to look at the multiple applications and models currently found, and determine the common element that will allow Manitobans to move back and forth between learning systems while having their prior learning recognized.

The common element in all PLAR systems is the necessity of describing both the outcomes of learning interventions and the desirable performance behaviours that are required to meet the standard, and of recognizing the learning in a fair, efficient and equitable way that addresses the needs of both workplace and worker.

In order to move towards the development of a model that can meet these needs and still float between other learning systems, it may be useful to begin by looking at the common elements and factors of good PLAR practice as defined by the research.

Elements of Good Practice

Research suggests that workplace PLAR will be most effective if:

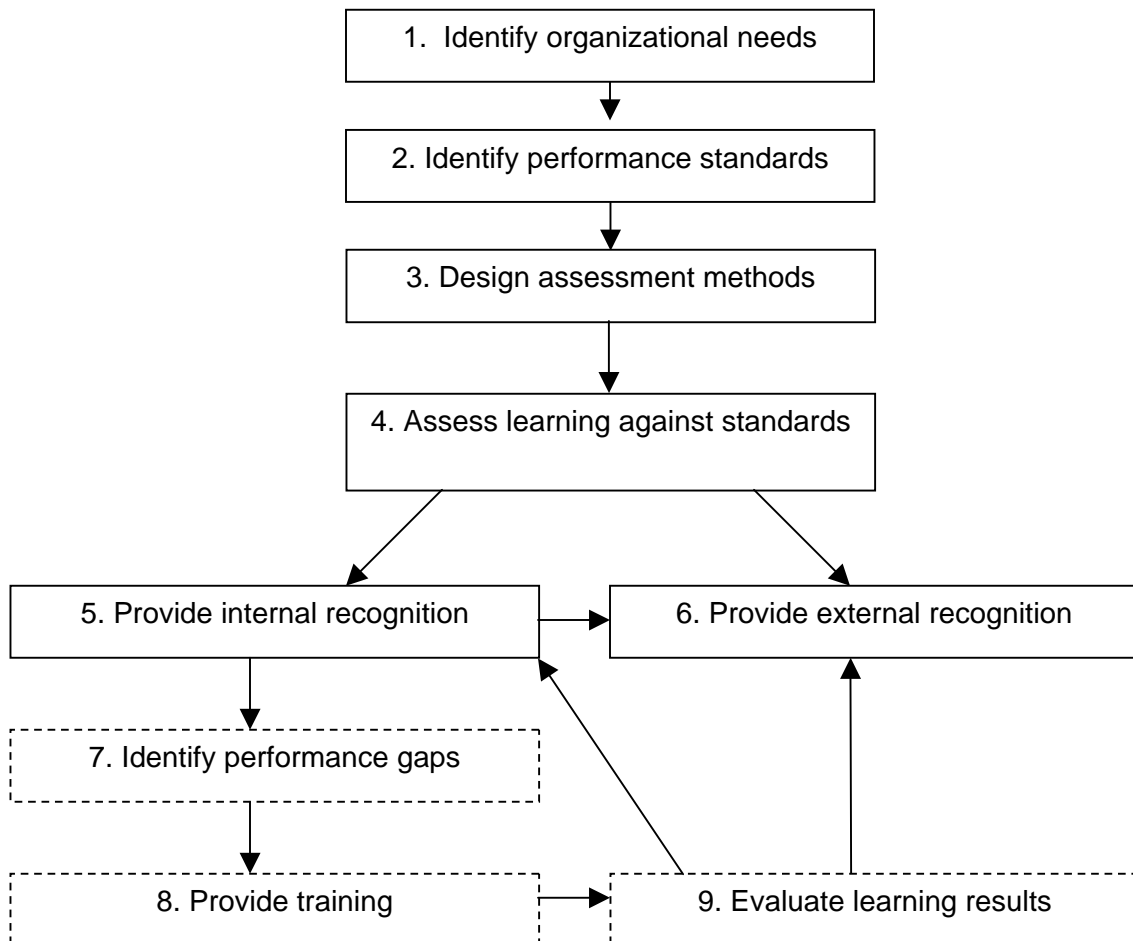
- PLAR is applied to the right situation for the right reason. Not all situations, individuals, courses and learning are amenable to a PLAR process
- PLAR is a partnership between all stakeholders. In a workplace context that could include employers, labour, and accreditation and regulatory bodies
- the process reduces/eliminates duplication of learning
- assessment is flexible, practical and, in the case of industry, workplace-related
- the process is transparent to all involved
- expectations, roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders are clearly communicated at the outset of any PLAR process
- updating and maintaining of the process - i.e., an administrative structure - is part of the PLAR project
- those involved in implementing the system are well-trained, dedicated and ethical
- the resulting PLAR process is neither cumbersome nor complex
- the end recognition has real value, both to the recognizing organization and the individual

4

MANITOBA WORKPLACE PLAR PROCESS

The diagram below summarizes how a PLAR process can be implemented in a workplace context. Each of these steps has their own complexity, as explained on following pages. One of the challenges is to ensure the rigour/effectiveness of the process and standards, while maintaining flexibility to apply the process to a number of workplace applications.

Workplace PLAR Process



Solid boxes are part of the PLAR process; dashed boxes indicate how the process can be extended to meet other organizational or individual learning needs.

1. Identify Organizational Needs

Organizations continually grapple with multiple needs and factors, including economic shifts, legislation changes, labour relations issues, new equipment for production, financing and legal compliance. Other needs are directly related to the performance of the organization's human resources.

PLAR can be one of many tools chosen to identify specific skill-related or process needs. Some areas where PLAR may be useful are:

- succession planning
- performance management
- recruitment
- placement and internal promotion
- training
- process identification and verification

For example ...

PLAR could help organizations that are developing training systems or working towards ISO certification for which they need to provide proof of their training standards.

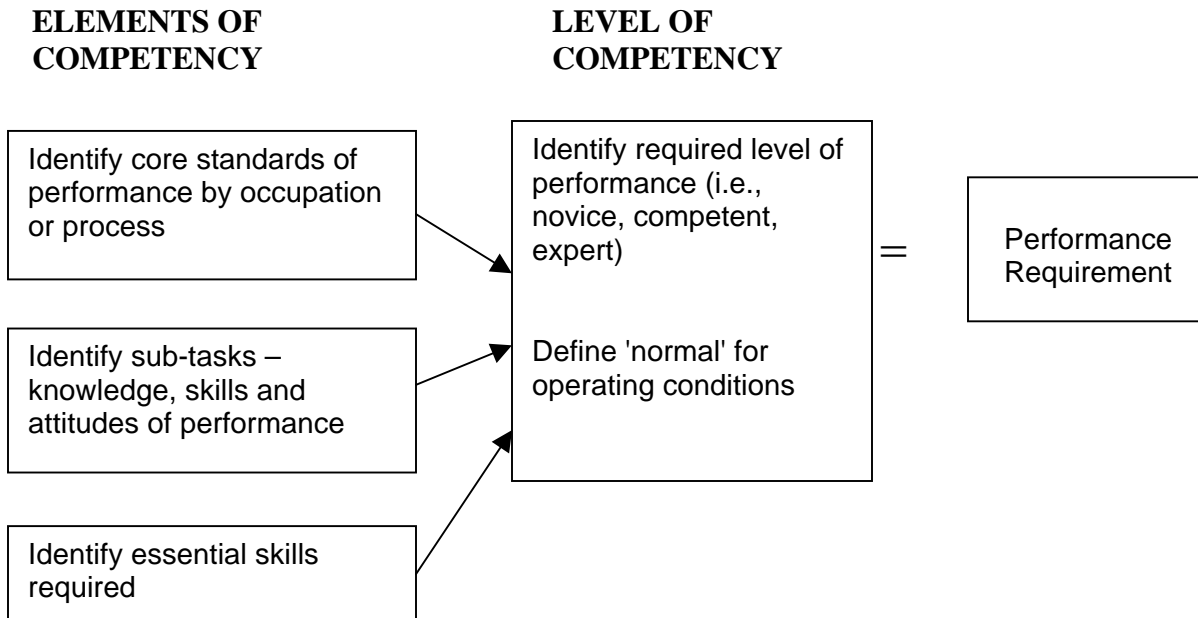
2. Identify Performance Requirements

The next step is to identify and document competencies and the level of performance required. Competencies can be organized by either occupational groups or process.

Major elements of performance analysis include:

- elements of competency
- level of competency

The chart on the next page shows how these relate to each other in a workplace PLAR process.



A variety of identification tools are available, each with their own inherent strengths and weaknesses. Methods include:

- Modified DACUM (Developing a Curriculum): in this process, a group of experts details the tasks in their own jobs through a facilitated process.
- JASR (Job Analysis at the Speed of Reality): this process is done with occupational experts' observation and listing of tasks, their frequency and criticality.
- Essential Skills Profiles: this is based on the model of Human Resources Development Canada, which interviews workers to identify critical skills, and relates them to various occupations. Job profiles already exist on a database.

Some job or task analysis information already exists. National Occupational Codes (NOC), sector council performance standards, and accreditation and licensing bodies frequently conduct job analyses on a provincial or national level. While details of an occupation vary somewhat from employer to employer, and would need to be validated locally, this information can be a useful starting point for an organization wishing to conduct job analyses.

For example ...

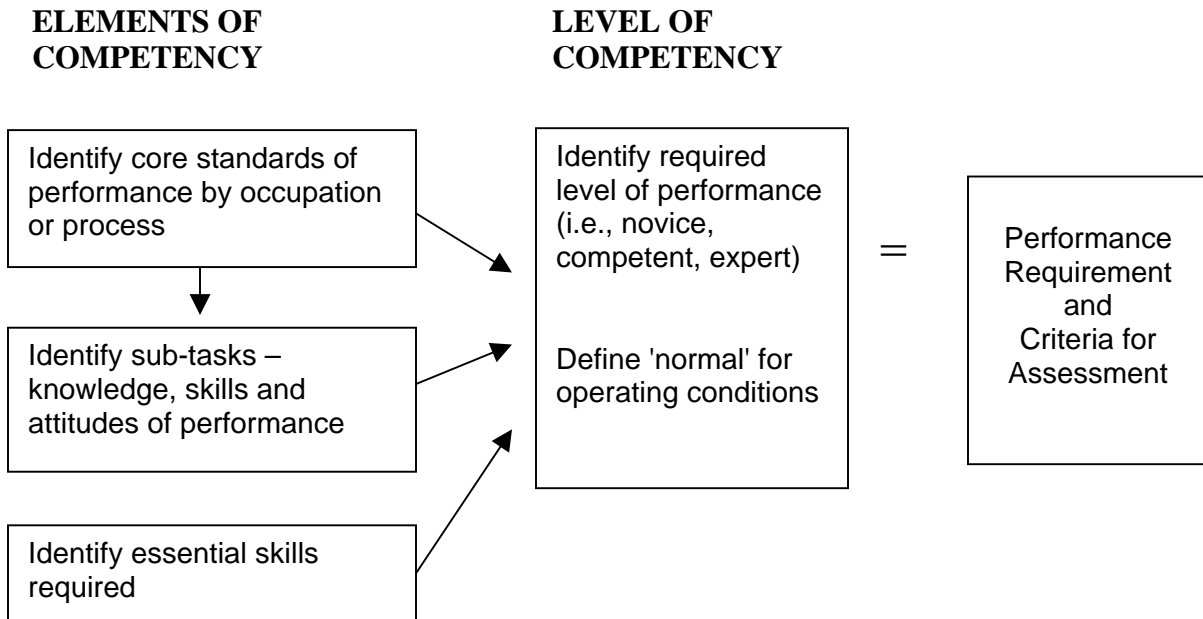
The organization will have listings of skills (competencies) required by occupation/process and a description of performance standards.

3. Design Prior Learning Assessment Methods

Once the competencies are documented, the next step is to develop authentic and flexible criteria for assessment. "How would you know someone knew how to do this task or process? What does it look like when this task or process is done adequately or expertly?"

Options for assessment methods include:

- task performance illustration
- observation of on-the-job performance
- validated statements of performance
- ongoing record of accomplishments
- review of work samples
- case studies and scenarios
- portfolio-assisted assessment
- challenge exams
- training file documentation
- certification
- self-assessment



Good Proof

Good proof is:

- Authentic – the learner can demonstrate the learning claimed.
- Current – the learning is valid, up-to-date and can be performed at work.
- High quality – the learning has reached the acceptable level.
- Relevant – learning is applicable to the area claimed.
- Trustworthy – learning is worthy of confidence.
- Transferable – Learning can be applied outside the specific context in which it was obtained.

In a workplace setting, the recognition of learning also needs to be recorded and tracked.

For example ...

The organization now has clear performance standards including methods and criteria for assessment. This can enable employees to self-assess and provides others with a template for ongoing assessment and maintenance of the competencies.

4. Assess Prior Learning Against Standards

Once the assessment tools have been selected, the process of measuring performance can begin. At this stage, the employees will demonstrate their individual performance - knowledge, skills and attitudes - against the standard.

Factors for successful assessment include:

- assessors who are skilled in assessment practices, as well as being subject-matter experts. In traditional PLAR systems, a knowledgeable advisor and an assessor are available to assist the learner through the process. These roles are likely to be performed differently in a workplace context. Assessors and advisors need to be chosen carefully, and thought needs to be given to how subject-matter experts can be provided with training in conducting assessments
 - employees who are fully aware of the purpose and process of the assessment
 - performance standards that are clearly written and easily understood
 - assessment process is transparent, objective and relevant, and can be consistently applied
 - in a unionized environment, the involvement of labour in the earliest stages of developing a PLAR process
 - an appropriate appeal process
-

For example ...

The organization will now have a transparent, documented and relevant measurement of performance against criteria and an overall skills inventory of employees. It is now clearly evident who can do what.

Planning Recognition

Once skills and knowledge have been assessed, it is necessary to provide fair, valuable and equitable recognition to the person who has been assessed. This recognition may take the form of either internal recognition (i.e., internal to the company or organization in which the individual works) or external recognition (i.e., from a second organization or institution).

5. Provide Internal Recognition

In PLAR, recognition of learning is the fundamental pay-off for engaging in the process. A secondary benefit is the empowerment of individuals through self-knowledge gained from a thorough review of their learning.

In traditional PLAR systems, such as post-secondary institutions, recognition means potentially gaining academic credit or, at the very least, clarifying education/employment goals.

In workplace-related PLAR systems, recognition is first received in-house. Individuals acknowledge what they know and what they can do.

Some benefits of this recognition of prior learning can include:

- internal promotion
- reduced training time
- access to new training opportunities internally and externally
- access to other opportunities such as health and safety committees, union duties
- clearly stated performance appraisals and transparent career paths
- certification

For example ..

The organization has individual, process and organizational report cards. Employees know what they know, and what they can do and the organization has a transparent, objective information system that can assist in effectively managing their human resources, defining processes or developing training.

6. Provide External Recognition

As well as applying PLAR to internal training and recognition, industry and business may also seek external recognition of workplace learning for a variety of purposes including accreditation in post-secondary courses, professional designations and/or certification in the trades. These documented competencies can also assist industry in articulating their needs for recruitment and external training. Effective application of PLAR requires partnerships with a variety of external organizations.

For example ...

An organization ensures that workers who meet internal performance criteria also receive advanced standing in a particular college course or program.

Beyond PLAR

Although a workplace PLAR process would generally be completed with internal and/or external recognition, it is possible to extend the value of the process by integrating it into ongoing training and performance management processes.

7. Identify Performance Gaps

Once skills have been assessed and compared to the criteria for assessment, it will appear that some individuals will have met all of the criteria, and other individual employees will meet the criteria only in part.

This analysis can assist in determining if the performance gap can be addressed through training and, if so, can provide the framework for developing, delivering and/or purchasing relevant focused training.

For example ...

The organization can now recognize those who have successfully demonstrated their skill and previous learning and provide follow-up training for those who still need development.

8. Provide Training

One of the advantages of a PLAR approach to identifying training needs is that it can provide for just the right training to be given to the right people at the right time. Training can be targeted to the gap between desired and actual job performance in a focused manner. The performance standards provide a starting point for curriculum development as they become the basis for learning outcomes.

For example ...

The documented competencies become the basis of the overall training curriculum. Performance gaps serve as a basis for focused training, reducing redundant training efforts.

9. Evaluate Learning Results

Training results can now be measured for their effectiveness in meeting identified gaps. The same types of flexible assessment methods used in identifying prior learning can be applied in this step.

This review can evaluate:

- improvements in levels of learning
- application of learning to job performance
- impact on organizational goals like customer service and reducing down time or error
- increased efficiency by process through time or productivity

The verification of learning can take place either at the end of training or at the job site. Information from this assessment can feed into other training evaluation models to track other impacts on the organization.

For example ...

The organization's goal of meeting the standards is now within reach. The transfer of learning to the job is measurable.

5

EXTERNAL LINKAGES

While many users of PLAR have internal purposes for applying competency-based assessment, the Manitoba government has recognized that the greatest benefit of PLAR is its role in enabling an integrated, seamless approach to education and training in the province.

In its 2001 PLAR Policy Framework, the government clearly states its objective to more effectively recognize learning from all realms of society, education and the workplace.

Industry already relies on ongoing partnerships with external organizations to meet a variety of training-related needs. For example:

- Community colleges have provided vocational and trade-type training with industry input for many years.
- Apprenticeship was essentially designed to ensure quality skill capabilities in the workplace.
- Businesses have often set entry-level requirements based on educational achievements, such as the basis for hiring being the successful completion of Grade 12, or set qualifications that require minimum certificates or degrees.
- Organizations have also utilized community training resources such as Employment Centres and Adult Learning Centres to provide training in areas like job readiness, math upgrading, English as a Second Language and literacy training.
- Universities across the country provide educational programs in business, for business i.e., CIM (Canadian Institute of Management) HRM (Human Resource Management) or MBA (Masters in Business Administration).
- Labour sponsored training allows employees to link with their peers in other organizations, industries and jurisdictions.
- There is a plethora of regulatory and certification bodies including Sector Councils and Industry associations that provide external assessment and recognition.
- Organizations are also looking for ways to recognize the credentials of foreign-trained immigrants.

In order to effectively implement PLAR in the workplace, there needs to be communication and cooperation between all training and education

providers in the province. Clear definition of competencies allows for a transparent connection between stakeholders and allows for the type of seamless education system envisioned by Manitobans.

6

THE CHALLENGE TO BUILDING INTERNAL WORKPLACE PLAR CAPACITY

Workplace PLAR is a tool that identifies, assesses and provides recognition of occupational or process competencies.

Like any tool, the successful implementation requires human resource capacity. Key requirements are:

- expertise in designing and working with competency-based tools
- subject-matter expertise on required skills, knowledge and attitudes
- expertise on developing and delivering workplace training
- capacity to provide advice to the individual on the PLAR process
- expertise in flexible assessment and recognition of workplace learning
- knowledge and experience in transferring learning to the job
- capability to coordinate with internal and external stakeholders
- expertise in the evaluation of training impacts on the job
- capability to create efficient documentation
- capability of managing the overall PLAR system development and implementation

These requirements currently reside in many places/functions in Manitoba; however, typically there is no one place/individual that encompasses and integrates all these functions in an industry context.

In a traditional PLAR system, practitioners describe their functions as coordinator, facilitator, advisor and assessor. In Manitoba, these skill sets are found in community colleges using PLAR and more recently in adult learning centres and employment agencies as their PLAR advisory services are being developed.

Experts in technical workplace functions, processes and occupations and the related training are also located in industry, with some practitioners working independently as workplace educators.

As well, there are ongoing efforts to bring consistency to the delivery of PLAR in Manitoba. This includes work being done at Red River College to deliver foundation and advanced training and clearly define a set of professional competencies for PLAR. As well, ongoing professional development and networking opportunities are being coordinated through the Manitoba Prior Learning and Assessment Network (MPLAN).

One of the challenges for workplace PLAR is to identify where the expertise exists and where there are gaps, to integrate the various functions into a workplace practice and to identify the logical approach for developing quality PLAR practice in a workplace context.

The second major challenge is for industry to create seamless integration with external education institutions. This will require the will to cooperate and an increase in the valuing of workplace training.

7

APPENDICES

The authors of this report intended to capture a snapshot of activities that would be relevant to workplace audiences. The research was not intended to be exhaustive and the following may contain omissions.

APPENDIX I: PLAR Activities In Manitoba – March 2002

Manitoba has a strong history of developing and supporting PLAR activities in partnership with post-secondary institutions, adult learning centres, employment centers, labour and industry.

This includes the release in November 2001 of the Government of Manitoba's *New Policy Framework for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)* which proposed a strengthened, integrated approach to PLAR built on three cornerstones:

- increasing PLAR capacity in post-secondary institutions
- strengthening advisory service within the community - adult learning centres and employment centres
- providing a greater focus on industry PLAR projects and their sustainability.

The following is a brief overview of current PLAR activities in Manitoba.

- **Industry-Based**

Workplace Prior Learning Assessment Committee – WPLAR is a business, labour and government partnership, which sponsors innovative research and development projects, promotes and markets workplace PLAR and oversees industry-based practitioner training.

Other workplace-related activities include:

- development of a partnership with Labour and Immigration to support the recognition of immigrant foreign credentials for greater access to employment opportunities
- development and partnership with the Aboriginal community to support the recognition of prior learning in a culturally appropriate way

Industry-based projects are partnerships linking stakeholders to provide an integrated system. A variety of projects are taking place in partnership with industry, regulatory bodies, sector councils and Apprenticeship, including:

Bristol Aerospace – A joint labour-management committee oversaw the development of this process, which grants credits for the prior learning/skills developed. A second initiative is underway to develop a competency-based training system, building on the first.

Aboriginal Cook Apprenticeship Opportunity – This program uses PLAR as a tool to promote and support the hiring of Aboriginal persons into the Level One Cook program.

Aircraft Maintenance Engineers (AMEs) – This industry/government/labour partnership through Manitoba Aerospace Human Resources Coordinating Committee (MAHRCC) is developing a PLAR process that is recognized by Transport Canada for the certification of AMEs License ‘M’ and ‘S’.

Apprenticeship – The Apprenticeship Branch is currently developing a policy for PLAR for new applicants and as part of its process for admitting mature students. Pilot projects are underway in the motor vehicle mechanic trade and cooks trade. Apprenticeship is also working with Labour and Immigration to provide support to qualified immigrant applicants in writing the inter-provincial Red Seal Exams.

Certified Technicians and Technologists of Manitoba – In partnership with Manitoba Hydro and Bristol Aerospace, is developing a performance-based alternative form of assessment for the certification of engineering and applied science technicians and technologists.

Manitoba Tourism Education Council (MTEC) – MTEC provides a PLAR process for the Hotel and Restaurant Administration Diploma. This project is a partnership between MTEC (sector council), Red River College, industry partners and Manitoba Industry Training Partnerships.

Software Development Diploma Program - PLAR was built into the design of the College's new part-time Software Development Diploma Program with the intent to make it easier for those already working in the field to gain diplomas. PLAR candidates would be assessed against whole-program outcomes. Products include an applicant guide and self-assessment checklist. This project is a partnership between Manitoba Information Technology Industries (sector council), Manitoba Industry Training Partnerships and Red River College.

North West Company – The NWC continues to participate in a research project to develop a culturally appropriate PLA system for hiring, internal transfer and external training credit for employees.

College of Midwives of Manitoba (CMM) - CMM has been working to create a PLAR system for Manitoba midwives, building on the work started in B.C. A project is currently underway to determine the steps necessary to implement a sustainable system in Manitoba for the long-term.

Canadian Institute for Management (CIM) - CIM, the Workplace Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition Committee, the University of Manitoba Continuing Education and a group of industry partners are examining the feasibility of developing a PLAR system for the Certificate in Management.

Articulating Workplace Outcomes Project – This project was undertaken to determine the outcome of essential skills workplace training and to develop a system to relate those outcomes to credit given for high school equivalency at Adult Learning Centres.

Employment Projects for Winnipeg (EPW) - EPW also continues to raise awareness with employers about portfolio use as evidence of competency. It is currently adding to their research in the development and appropriate use of career portfolios. EPW has created a portfolio development guide for clients, which can be used independently or during facilitated group work. EPW has taught clients the measured use of portfolios for job applications and this is based on research with employers as to what they consider to be appropriate evidence.

- **Diversity**

Aboriginals and PLAR - A working group is underway to examine a coordinated PLAR development plan for Aboriginals in Manitoba.

Immigrants and PLAR – Manitoba Labour and Immigration has been working consistently with regulatory bodies around the examination of competency-based assessment for foreign-trained professionals. Focused discussions have occurred with various health groups and engineers.

- **Community Services**

Adult Learning Centres – PLAR is being used in conjunction with goal setting for further education and training and for credit against the Mature Student Diploma. About 187 adult educators have received some PLAR training with the majority of those having received more extensive training. Eventually, adults in transition will be able to receive advisory services for identifying goals related to further education and training. Adults will also be able to use PLAR to gain credit towards the Mature High School Diploma.

Employment and Training Services - ETS is training staff to offer advisory services to clients referred through the four Winnipeg Employment Centers. Employment Connections will be an area of expertise for in-depth PLAR services. Most counselors received introductory training in PLAR over the past year and some received more advanced training.

Manitoba Prior Learning Assessment Network (MPLAN) – A network of individuals representing business, education, industry, government and community organizations who are interested in supporting and promoting quality PLAR practices in the province.

- **K to S4**

K to Senior 4 – The Challenge for Credit Option provides students with a process challenge for course credits and will be implemented beginning in the 2002-2003 school year.

- **Post-Secondary**

PLAR positions are in place at Red River College, Collège universitaire Saint-Boniface, Keewatin and Assiniboine Community Colleges, Brandon University and the University of Winnipeg.

Examples of specific programs include:

Assiniboine Community College

Community Social Development - PLAR can be used to gain credit for the practicum portion of the program.

Rural Development Program - A fully integrated PLAR system which involved faculty in developing program outcomes, course outcomes and assessment criteria.

Brandon University

First Nations and Aboriginal Counselling - PLAR was mandated at the outset of this program, to provide academic credit and formal recognition for individuals whose training had been largely informal but were already functioning as counselors within their communities.

Psychiatric Nursing Program - The PLAR process for this program was developed after a thorough process of aligning course content with occupational requirements. Program outcomes were clarified before course objectives were developed, ensuring that all priority areas were addressed at some point in the program. Prior learning assessment is thus based on very clear requirements. All faculty members were involved in the development of the program and of the PLAR process. Currently, ways of addressing gap training are being explored.

Keewatin Community College

Keewatin Community College is using PLAR for application towards any and all programs they run. Individual assistance, such as portfolio development, is offered to any individual on request.

Red River College

Red River College has extensive PLAR practices, clearly articulated policies and procedures and well-developed resources in place to meet the needs of adult learners who are returning to college with significant learning from their work and life experience.

RRC was one of the first colleges in Canada to formally implement PLA. Nursing, Child Care and Dental Assistant were the first programs. The top programs receiving requests for PLAR assessments include: Micro Computer Applications, Early Childhood Education, Certificate in Adult Education, Health Care Aide, Business and Administrative Studies, Civil Technology, Info Systems Programmer Analyst, Health Unit Clerk and Child and Youth Care Worker.

RRC is developing and implementing a multi-faceted two-level PLAR training program. PLAR Foundation Training Level I is currently available and Level II is expected to be available in the fall of 2002 with both programs eventually being available online.

Successful credits were granted in Academic Day programs including Community Services, Applied Sciences, Business and Applied Arts, teacher education, Transportation Technology, and Industrial Technologies. Successful credits were granted in a wide variety (24 programs) of Continuing Education and Distance Education programs such as Business Industry and Trade, Drafting/CAD, Human Resource Management, and Health Care Aide to name a few. Child and Youth Care, Dental Assisting, Developmental Services Worker, Early Childhood Education and Health Care Aide all have specific PLA advisors, well-developed PLA systems and award PLA credits on a regular basis.

The following examples illustrate these initiatives.

Early Childhood Education Program -This project developed a system allowing skilled, experienced child care employees to gain Early Childhood Educator II classification based on evidence of their competency. The project included developing materials and processes, and training assessors/advisors.

Manufacturing Technology Program- This enables individuals from the workplace to challenge for credit across the entire Manufacturing Technician Diploma Program.

University of Winnipeg

The Learning Experience Assessment Program (LEAP) - This allows individuals to assess their learning towards credit in Arts, Science, the Faculty of Theology, joint graduate programs and joint programs with Red River College.

APPENDIX II: The Canadian Context

- **General**

Across Canada, there are examples of applying PLAR to assist individuals to gain high school training and to articulate workplace education and training into high school credits. Some specific examples include:

British Columbia Adult High School Diploma - The adult high school diploma can be articulated between school divisions, community colleges and adult basic education programs. PLAR credit is available for all courses. Students may take courses toward the diploma through colleges, school divisions or through any combination of courses.

PLA Centre, Halifax, Nova Scotia - This joint venture involves five Halifax universities, the provincial community college system as well as representatives from labour, the private sector, government and community agencies. This program provides a variety of services, to assist individuals affected by changes in their work and career to identify their knowledge and skills.

Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board - This business, labour, education, government partnership is actively developing PLAR services, including a virtual PLAR clearinghouse, and resource, training and certification of PLAR assessors, a variety of methods for learning verification, client assessment and referral services and PLAR services adopted by industry sectors and professional associations.

- **Post-Secondary**

Learning institutions across Canada are interested in developing and applying PLAR policies. The following is a brief sample of some of those colleges and universities.

Assiniboine Community College, Manitoba - Community Social Development - This college program uses PLAR for entrance requirements and course credits in presentation and word processing skills.

Cabot College, Newfoundland - PLAR is used in its Early Childhood Education Program. The college also coordinates the design and delivery of training in PLAR for other institutions introducing PLAR.

Centre for Nursing Studies, Newfoundland - PLAR can be used to gain credit for entire courses or course modules in a nursing program.

Douglas College British Columbia - PLAR and occupational competencies are used for pre-employment and programs in the child care services, community living services and child and family services sub-sector. The college is currently working on connecting workplace-based training with college credits.

PLA Practitioner Training, PEI - Holland College and the PEI Department of Education have developed a distance education model to deliver PLAR practitioner training.

Royal Roads University, British Columbia - PLAR is part of the application process for all programs.

Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology - SIAST has developed a clear college-related PLAR process.

Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board: Post Secondary Education-sponsored Pilots - Regional colleges are looking at industry-based PLAR projects starting with a review of clerical jobs.

Southern Alberta Institute of Technology, Alberta - An electronic PLAR tool has been developed to assist students with self-assessment. Support is provided to those lacking proficiency in the English language.

- **Workplace/Industry**

The environmental scan also identified a variety of workplace/industry PLAR projects in progress.

Bristol Aerospace, Manitoba - A joint union/management PLAR initiative was developed to consolidate 108 job classifications into 24 broad classifications and based on those classifications, recognize and accredit current skills and identify required training.

Northern Neighbours, Saskatchewan - This partnership links the labour force of northern Saskatchewan to jobs in the Alberta oil sands sector. The project includes a skill profile database of northern Saskatchewan residents and related experience, qualifications and interest in employment.

Prior Learning Assessment for Forest Worker Skills, British Columbia - This prior learning assessment tool can assess skills against level 1 of the *Forest Worker Measurable Learning Outcomes* document. The assessment includes practical exercises and a field exam and assists forestry workers in making choices for further education and training.

Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board, Forestry Sector Project - Phase 1 of the project involved building awareness of PLAR and support and scope of the project. The sawmill operator and off-road haul operator occupations were chosen for further work and the assessment process is currently under development.

- **Labour**

Unions have traditionally been committed to learning as demonstrated through their strong support of a universal right to public education, their advocacy of learning opportunities in the workplace and their own extensive education programs. Labour has shown interest in PLAR for its potential to document, recognize, and reward the skills and knowledge of their members, increase portability of skills and credentials, and provide enhanced job opportunities. However, organized labour also has serious concerns about the use of PLAR in the workplace. Equity is a key principle underlying all of the labour movement's interest in education and training. The labour movement has been very clear and firm on the need to maintain the 'R' (recognition) in PLAR.

If a list of good PLAR principles from a labour perspective existed, it might look something like this:

- PLAR must be participatory
- Processes must be consistent with worker's rights
- Labour must be involved when core competencies and skills are being defined
- PLAR must help provide greater access to education for all people, particularly equity groups
- Financial issues related to PLAR must be explored and developed with labour input
- PLAR should not be used to dilute occupation or program standards, or override seniority or other aspects of a collective agreement

(From speaking notes of Graham Dowdell a labour co-representative on WPLAR committee, MB, April 24, 2002)

Labour has been part of both the workplace projects cited above (previous heading) and the sector council initiatives cited below (following), however they have taken a limited role in pilot programs applying the principles and practices of PLAR. One exception to this is the:

Metro Labour Education Centre's Portfolio Development Course, Toronto – This pilot project was to improve employment prospects for participants with English as a second language through the development of a portfolio development course based on the principles of PLAR.

- **Apprenticeship**

All signs are pointing to increasing shortages of skilled trades people in the coming years. In Ontario, the development of the EARAT (Evaluating Academic Readiness for Apprenticeship Training) for the trades is to determine readiness for trades training, eliminating arbitrary entrance requirements and speeding the route through apprenticeship for those with prior learning.

The EARAT materials are intended for use in a career-counselling context, to help individuals make informed career and training decisions. The EARAT system includes highly contextualized, trade-specific assessments for each of the Red Seal trades. The assessments address the specific math, science and reading comprehension requirements of apprenticeship training in the given trade. EARAT also includes instructional materials to fill the skill gaps.

As well, the restructuring of apprenticeship in Quebec is examining ways to more effectively recognize experiential learning.

In Nova Scotia, the Alternative Path into Apprenticeship Training program is using PLAR to assess

and assist those without a complete Grade 12 to enter apprenticeship training. There is currently no process to PLAR actual trade skills.

- **Aboriginal**

Research points to PLAR as having considerable promise in addressing some of the labour market challenges facing the Aboriginal population. Effective demonstration of existing skills and prior learning can limit some of the systemic barriers to employment, including relying on high school completion as a condition of entry to employment.

Prior learning assessment can potentially provide a fair, objective and culturally appropriate way of measuring actual skills and knowledge and can more accurately identify skill gaps and specific training needs. Specific examples of projects underway in Canada include:

Aboriginal Cook Apprenticeship Opportunity, Winnipeg, Manitoba - This partnership with apprenticeship is developing a prior learning assessment model with an on-line self assessment tool.

Brandon University First Nations and Aboriginal Counselling Program, Manitoba - This program is designed to be amenable to PLAR and includes the opportunity to PLA for credit in special areas such as traditional spiritual teaching.

First Nations Technical Institute, Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory, Ontario - This program provides a holistic model, which effectively blends the PLAR portfolio approach with aboriginal holistic approaches to teaching and learning. This has included developing innovative approaches to documenting learning.

Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies - This program provides a certificate in aboriginal employment development based on an on-line program and group labs, and on-the-job experience modules designed around PLAR-based competencies/learning outcomes.

Sto:lo (sic) Nation in partnership with University College of the Fraser Valley, B.C. - This partnership is developing a prior learning assessment model for Sto:lo people currently working or wanting to work in the social services field. This includes incorporating aboriginal cultural content into the Bachelor of Social Work program.

- **Foreign-Trained Workers**

Across Canada, the labour force possesses a wealth of skills and knowledge in its population of foreign-trained workers. However, finding employment that is consistent with this training and experience can be a very long process, and a significant proportion remains under-employed, in the sense that skills and knowledge are never fully utilized.

PLAR can provide immigrants with accurate transparent information about occupational requirements, and provide employers and professional/industry associations with fair, objective and practical measures of an individual's skills. Both uses of PLAR rest on a foundation of clearly articulated occupational requirements. Some projects using elements of PLAR to address this challenge include:

British Columbia Ministry of Multiculturalism and Immigration - Bridging Program for Foreign-Trained Nurses - This program provides orientation to the Canadian health care system, occupation-specific language training and a clinical practicum experience studying options for the Live- In Caregiver Program.

PLAR for Foreign-Trained Midwives, Ontario College of Midwives - This program provides an occupationally appropriate language assessment as well as a process for evaluating skills and knowledge. The process takes about 18 months and costs \$3,000.

Sector Orientation Terminology Information Counselling (STIC), Toronto - This program offers newcomers to Canada a seven-week program to orient them to their respective trades and professions.

- **Certification and Regulatory Bodies**

Similarly to foreign-trained workers, PLAR can be used to support labour mobility across Canada and provide workers with clear, transparent career planning. Some examples of related activities in Canada include:

Alberta Association of Registered Nurses: Guidelines for Portfolio Development - Recommends PLAR-based portfolio development as part of the Association's Continuing Competence Program and as a tool for professional development.

Ontario's Bridging Project: Creating Access to Regulated Employment for Nurses Project (CARE) - The Ontario government, licensing bodies, educational institutions and community agencies are working together to develop prior learning assessment and recognition processes in nursing and pharmacy.

Professionalization of Newfoundland & Labrador Fish Harvesters - PLAR-like approaches are being used to support the introduction of a certification system for professional fish harvesters in the province. Certification is based on a defined number of full-time fishing years and the accumulation of a defined number of education credits.

- **Government and Sector Councils**

At the national level, a number of sector councils and regulator bodies are applying PLAR to their labour market challenges. Some examples include:

Software Human Resources Council - This national organization partners with colleges across Canada to apply PLAR to the development of occupational skills profiles.

Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators - PLAR is used to assess skills of applicants seeking certification. Based on the assessment, learning plans are established to bring applicants up to industry standards.

Canadian Aviation Maintenance Council - National examinations developed along the lines of PLAR principles are used to determine the skills of Canadian and foreign-trained workers. Personal logbooks are in use to document training skills and work experience and this documentation can be used to obtain employment, gain credentials, determine training needs and provide career counselling.

Canadian Council of Technicians and Technologists - PLAR is used to examine training and experience of foreign-trained workers.

Canadian Environmental Certification Approval Board, Canadian Council for Human Resources in the Environmental Industry - Certification processes have been developed that focus on what people can do. This information is used to develop skill sets and occupational standards.

Canadian Steel Trades and Employment Congress (CSTEC) - CSTEC uses PLA to enhance worker mobility within the industry. CSTEC partnered with 20 community colleges and CEGEPS to develop a portfolio development course, which allows participants to receive credit for prior learning from both work and life experiences.

Canadian Technology Human Resources Board - An online method of evaluating competencies of applicants based on national and international skills and certification standards has been developed. As well, the database maintains a list of qualified individuals.

Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers - This Aboriginal economic development certification program provides PLAR for all courses. The program is based on 16 competencies; applicants can demonstrate competencies by completing the courses, challenging the courses on a course-by-course basis and through prior learning assessment.

Forum for International Trade Training (FITT) - Assessments can be carried out through a challenge process involving a challenge exam or completion of a project specific to a skills module.

National Tourism Human Resources Council - In partnership with trainers and colleges across the country, a combination of exams and skills demonstrations can be used to gain certification.

Skills Data Card Initiative (SDCI) – (Project sponsor - Construction Safety Assoc. of Ontario)
A 'smart card' was developed which tracks individuals' evidence of all job-related qualifications and certifications.

APPENDIX III: International Models of PLAR

One of the challenges Canada faces in developing a coherent approach to PLAR is the shared jurisdiction between the federal and provincial governments for labour market development. The following provides descriptions of national PLAR systems in other countries where the national government has primary responsibility for education, training and workforce development.

- **Australia**

Initiated in response to the need to integrate foreign-trained workers into the workforce. Concepts of access and cultural diversity are critical to understanding the system.

Basics of the system

- recognition of education and training based on the actual competencies demonstrated by the individual, not on the amount of time spent within an educational system
- a flexible and modularized education system
- a system of twelve national competence standards
- more flexible methods for recognition of overseas qualifications and improved access for disadvantaged groups to education and training
- industry-driven competency definitions

- **Finland**

Basics of the system

- system introduced by law, for the purpose of establishing a system that would recognize, validate and certify skills regardless of how they had been acquired
- qualification consists of modules or parts, enabling the individual to select those modules on which he or she wishes to be tested
- integrates PLAR and vocational education into the national quality system
- three levels of qualification
- standards and criteria for qualification defined by the National Board of Education, based on recommendations from tripartite committees of representatives from employers, employees, and government
- qualification awarded on the basis of a formally regulated examination; no portfolios
- assessment measures developed by examination boards, that includes representation from employers, employees, and educational authorities
- examination boards cooperate with educational institutions in planning the tests and in addressing gaps in the candidates' skills

- **France**

Basics of the system

- system for identification and assessment of prior and non-formal learning was the first to be established on a national level
- objective to identify and assess achievements from social as well as working life
- The *bilan de competence* is the basic element of the system – refers to a process that documents a person's attainments outside of the formal education system
- essentially a portfolio system and remains the property of the person concerned.
- system of validating previous learning and giving credit through the formal education system

- **Ireland**

Basics of the system

- FÁS (Training and Employment Authority of Ireland) is the statutory awarding (certification) body
- certifies skills acquired not only in formal training courses, but also at work and in other learning situations
- drew on the existing literature and transformed it into pragmatic workable models
- PLAR policy is formulated within a framework that focuses on certification of skills rather than courses
- strongly industry-based
- modular focus provides either for full certification or part credits.
- assessment methods are portfolio development and formal testing, supported by candidate briefing
- computer 'expert system' in which advisors guide candidates through the portfolio process
- creation of a body that covers the responsibilities of FÁS as well as the responsibilities related to academic awards, with the intention of improving the coherence

- **United Kingdom**

Basics of the system

- system of National Vocational Qualifications/Scottish Vocational Qualifications or NVQs/SVQs (1986)
- qualifications are divided into units of competence which can be gained at five levels defined by criteria such as the breadth, the complexity and the degree of transferability of competence
- National Council for Vocational Qualification (NCVQ) and its Scottish equivalent, SCOTVEC, have required that APL should be available for all the qualifications which they accredit (NVQ, GNVQs, SVQs and GSVQs)
- PLAR widely used in job entry, re-entry or worker adjustment programs
- PLAR was first offered to individuals who did not have the formal prerequisites for higher education

- portfolios widely used as an assessment method: portfolios are the property of the individual
- growing network of regional accreditation centres that provide community-based assessment services
- growing recognition of the need for PLAR at the university level

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Industry Training and Apprenticeship ITAC	www.itac.gov.bc.ca www.learnandearn.bc.ca/whatsnew/pla/pdf
Learning Labour: A PLAR Project Dr. Bruce Spencer, Athabasca University	www.oise.utoronto.ca/depts/sese/cse/nall/project/2_9_proj.htm
Manitoba Education and Training	www.edu.gov.mb.ca/tce/index.html
Manitoba Tourism Education Council	www.mtec.mb.ca
National Adult Literacy Database	www.nald.ca
National Tourism Human Resources Council	www.mtec.mb.ca
National Vocational Qualifications Award Structure (England)	www.taac.org.uk/TheNVQ.htm
Nova Scotia PLA Centre	www.placentre.ca
OISE	www.oise.utoronto.ca/depts/cswe/nall/plar.htm
Online PLAR practitioner training through partnership between CAEL and DePaul University	www.cael.org/Events/PLAOnline.asp www.lifelearn.depaul.edu/pla
Ontario College of Midwives	www.equalopportunity.on.ca/english_g/apt/plabestprac.html www.skillsforchange.org

PEI distance ed. Model of PLA practitioner training	http://Olt-bta.hrdc.gc.ca/publicat/69028exesum
PLA in New Brunswick	www.gov.nb.ca
PLA Online Resources from the Open Learning Agency	www.ola.bc.ca/pla/resources
Province of Ontario	www.equalopportunity.on.ca
Registered Nurses Association of Ontario: PLAR policy statement	www.rnao.org/html/pr_st_18.htm
Royal Roads University	www.ucfv.bc.ca/crd/News-releases/NR-archives/1999-releases/Fncontent.htm
Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies	www.siiit.sk.ca/caed/caed.htm
Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board	www.dlewest.com/~slfdb
Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology	www.siaast.ca
University College of the Caribou	www.ola.bc.ca/pla/resource/news/html
University of Saskatchewan	www.extension.usask.ca/ExtensionDivision/resources

APPENDIX V: WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY CHART

Applying PLAR to Workforce Development	
Objective	Suggested Applications
Succession and Career Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLAR can identify the skills required for success in a given position, and can be used to design a systematic training/employee development plan to train for vacant positions. • PLAR can provide fair and accurate methods for determining which of the target skills an individual already possess. • Employees will know the skill requirements of jobs at the next level and be able to plan their learning accordingly. • Individuals can use PLAR methods to demonstrate their readiness for another position.
Compensation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Salaries, bonuses and incentives can be tied to performance benchmarks identified in a PLAR process.
Regulatory Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLAR can be used to develop skills inventories to provide proof of capabilities by occupation, occupational grouping and/or process.
Performance Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLAR can assist in expressing corporate/departmental goals in terms of observable behaviours and specific assessment criteria. and enable the measurement of progress towards goals • PLAR can assist in clearly defining job requirements and expectations for individual employee plans. • Clearly articulated expectations and assessment processes can form part of the formal performance appraisals. • Performance expectations and assessments developed as part of PLAR can be used as tools to provide ongoing feedback on improved performance.
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tools developed as part of PLAR can provide clear selection criteria and flexible methods for assessing applicants in recruitment. • Skills/learning assessment can assist in placing employees in the right position. • Clear identification and documentation of required skills/learning can provide a framework for job design and employee orientation.
Organizational Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation and tracking done as part of PLAR can provide information for identifying required skills and current skills and forecasting recruitment and training required for future needs.

<p>Employee/ Labour Relations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documentation of required skills done as part of PLAR can build joint understanding and recognition among employees, labour and management of performance requirements. • PLAR can be applied for assessing knowledge and compliance with healthy and safety regulations and practices. • PLAR allows for transparency and equity.
<p>Training and Development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PLAR can be used in needs analysis for training. • PLAR flexible assessment methods can be used to evaluate training. • PLAR can reduce unnecessary and/or duplication of technical training by specifying actual skills/learning gaps. • PLAR can be used to develop performance standards that measure individuals' application/demonstration of soft skills – performance indicators. • PLAR can assist in team building by identifying what skills are present/absent in a team and conduct staff development or adjust team membership to address skill gaps. PLAR can assist teams in understanding the strengths and roles of all individuals within a team.

APPENDIX VI: PLAR TERMS

Throughout the research a number of terms are used, sometimes interchangeably in describing and discussing PLAR.

This glossary is an attempt to provide the basis for a common language in PLAR for the workplace.

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) – the identification, assessment and documentation of learning from life and work experiences. It reflects learning that is assessed in a rigorous yet flexible manner and best accommodates a learner’s ability to show what they know and can do.

Assessment – a process by which a judgment is made about the quality and level of learning attained.

Flexible Assessment – the application of a variety of means to prove prior learning that can include documentation, practical demonstrations, performance observation, testimonials, and formal and informal testing.

Benchmark – a well-established measurement of performance specifically chosen to serve as a guide to compare the value of actual performance against compensation factors.

Learning Outcomes – a statement describing what a learner should know and be able to do as a result of a learning intervention. They capture the type of learning that reflects the complex integration of knowledge, skills, attitudes and capabilities.

Performance Elements – the components of a learning outcome that a learner must know and be able to do successfully to demonstrate the required learning.

Assessment Criteria – the standards/indicators used to judge the worth of learning/performance outcomes.

Competencies – identification of what should be known or done.