



ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR ATLANTIC FISHERIES (ESAF) PROJECT

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION FINDINGS FOR FRENCH LANGUAGE COHORT

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BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

The Essential Skills for Atlantic Fisheries (ESAF) project added a French cohort in New Brunswick to the overall ESAF Cohort 2 with Official Languages for Minority Communities (OLMC) funding.

EVALUATION DATA COLLECTION

The following summary provides a snapshot of key learnings gleaned from evaluator telephone interviews for the Cohort 2 French language, including:

- Employers, mentors, and participants (n=6 total for all three types of interviewees combined)
- Project personnel for both the overall ESAF project and the NB French language cohort project including the French language coordinator and facilitators (n=6 total for all these interviewees combined)

To protect privacy, no employer personnel or individual participants are identified. This information contributed to the overall ESAF final evaluation report.

IMPLEMENTATION (FROM INTAKE/EXIT FORMS)

There were 8 participants and 5 mentors involved in French language Cohort 2. All five mentors completed the training. Seven participants completed the virtual training (component 1), 5 completed on-the job training (component 2), and 4 completed the work placement (component 3). The participants who did not complete the project components exited due to other job opportunities or for health reasons.

PROCESS EVALUATION FINDINGS

COVID-19 AND OTHER FACTORS THAT AFFECTED IMPLEMENTATION

The main external factor or event that affected project implementation was Covid-19 public health restrictions, which caused delays as the project switched from classroom to virtual training for participants (except the training already completed prior to public health restrictions). It also caused issues for employers altering work schedules and timing of project involvement.

EMPLOYER NEEDS

Interviewees felt the industry is facing present and future labour shortages in their local area. There is an urgent need for labour market solutions to meet growing skill shortages and demand. Labour shortages are driven by older employee retirement, youth outmigration, and rapid turnover of entry level employees due to work demands or employment barriers faced by potential employees.

PARTICIPANT NEEDS

Many participants faced employment barriers such as low literacy, low motivation, lack of confidence, lack of problem-solving ability, length of time out of the workforce, personal circumstances, and lack of transportation. Some participants saw a need to improve their education and gain workplace skills and also saw ESAF as a pathway to a job or noted that they needed work.

WHAT WORKED WELL

Positive feedback on project staff

The project was supported by experienced, relatable, and adaptable personnel who developed excellent relationships with employer representatives and participants; encouraged and supported participants to build their confidence; and were flexible to adapt the delivery of training, where needed.

Positive feedback on training

Project flexibility was an asset including the flexibility to adjust to meet participants' unique learning needs and circumstances, the Covid-19 public health restrictions, etc. Covid-19 necessitated a switch to virtual participant training and delayed it slightly but the project moved rapidly to virtual delivery.

Training material was standardized, very well organized with good content, had a good outline, and was an easy-to-follow presentation. Using 'hands on' activities was an effective learning approach for participants who had been out of school and or the workforce. Some participants needed more assistance through telephone calls. Some participants gained additional skills in virtual tools. Participants liked the learning technology, getting the Chromebook, the flexibility to review lessons when convenient, and to ability to work at their own pace.

The mentor training was seen to include relevant topics and resources such as conflict resolution; suitable topics and objectives; and a good balance of presentation and discussion. The mentors felt proud to have been chosen for this training and felt the company wanted to invest in them.

Role of mentors

Many participants noted the positive contributions of mentors to their experiences. Mentors were seen to be patient and helped by giving them step-by-step instructions, answering their questions, and understanding their limitations.

Positive feedback on partner and stakeholder relationships

Communication and collaborative relationships among partners and stakeholders were key for planning and implementation, which helped to pivot in the early stages of the pandemic.

CHALLENGES

Understanding challenges can explain the context of project implementation and can contribute to identifying suggestions for improvement in future projects. Challenges faced included:

- Mentors juggling the completion of ESAF training with work demands.

- Covid-19 necessitated a switch to virtual training, delaying project implementation slightly but the project moved rapidly to virtual delivery. Some participants found the switch to virtual learning challenging at first or faced Internet access issues but most were able to adjust to virtual delivery. Some participants felt that learning computer skills and how to participate in virtual learning and/or avoiding the need for transportation to the training site were positives.
- An orientation to computers prior to the training would have been helpful as it was time consuming, at first it created challenges. Participants had different level of computer skills, some had none, but it worked out over time. [Note: This was difficult to do because of the pandemic. However, participants were provided with an instructional booklet, including how to use the Chromebook with screen shots. The Chromebooks for participants were also pre-loaded with the required links for quick access and email accounts were created for participants prior to the training.]
- The level of participant literacy in the context of virtual training was a challenge but succeeded with lots of support.

OUTCOMES

PARTICIPANT OUTCOMES

Essential Skills outcomes

Many of the employment barriers faced by the participants were addressed in the training. The project provided practical job skills and gave participants confidence and motivation to return to work. Participants skills gained included learning about employer expectations, time management, math skills, oral communication, time management, specific literacy and numeracy skills, working with others, and digital technology such as Chromebooks and virtual learning. Some participants demonstrated their determination to succeed. ESAF motivated them to work in the fishing industry, stay in the community, and continue to learn or go back to school.

“Lift people up, it makes a difference.”

“Shine a spotlight on people and you see things improve.”

Participants were better prepared for what to expect in the workplace; learned workplace skills; had site tours and talks with employers; were better prepared for job duties; and were provided with the skills to advance in the workplace.

EMPLOYER AND MENTOR OUTCOMES

Mentors gained skills by being better prepared to effectively communicate with employees with different skills and capabilities to help instruct them on how to productively do their jobs. Mentors were given the tools to deal with employee challenges and issues in a professional manner. It helped them with a long-term approach to their employees through listening skills, confidence building, and problem solving any issues or situations that arose in the workplace. The project provided employers with skilled employees in their community.