



Enhancing Displaced Workers' Literacy and Essential Skills Project

Evaluation Framework

June 2019

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Since its establishment in December 1991, SRDC has conducted over 350 projects and studies for various federal and provincial departments, municipalities, as well as other public and non-profit organizations. SRDC has offices located in Ottawa and Vancouver, and satellite offices in Calgary and Montreal.

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INTRODUCTION

Decoda is British Columbia's only province-wide literacy organization. It provides resources, training and funds to support community-based literacy programs and initiatives in over 400 communities. Decoda's work supports children and families, youth, adults, Indigenous and immigrant communities in an effort to build strong individuals, strong families and strong communities.

Decoda is implementing a project to fill knowledge gaps on what works for Literacy and Essential Skills (LES) support and training for displaced workers to improve their employability. The project, titled Enhancing Displaced Workers Literacy and Essential Skills, will seek to enhance knowledge and raise awareness of promising LES service responses to workforce displacement for individuals and communities in Canada.

Decoda commissioned the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) to design and conduct a developmental evaluation of the Enhancing Displaced Workers Literacy and Essential Skills project. The evaluation will be designed to help Decoda and its partners to develop a research project that addresses knowledge gaps on what works for LES support and tests promising training interventions for displaced workers in Canada to improve their employability. The goal of these activities is to understand the current state of knowledge of effective interventions and tools that can support displaced workers with LES training needs in order to facilitate their re-entry into the labour market. The findings from this research will provide a better understanding of how LES affects job displacement, job search, re-employment as well as access to training and employment supports and services with the ultimate goal of setting the foundation for the piloting of innovative responses with project partners.

This document presents SRDC's strategy for conducting the developmental evaluation of the project. We detail the proposed evaluation strategy, methodology, and work plan that SRDC will utilize to evaluate the Enhancing Displaced Workers Literacy and Essential Skills project.

BACKGROUND

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The overall objective of The Enhancing Displaced Workers' Literacy and Essential Skills project is to fill knowledge gaps on what works in the realm of displaced workers learning and essential skills (DWLES) supports and training for displaced workers in Canada to improve their employability. The project is aimed at supporting workers who have been displaced from their jobs through planned or unplanned circumstances, with a focus on those workers who are hard to reach or reluctant to access skills training or employment services, and who have low essential skills

including digital skills. The project will aim to identify and test models that have the potential to be adapted and expanded at the national level, by conducting beta tests involving new Displaced Worker Outreach Teams and network partners in select regions of BC and Canada to evaluate their effectiveness and scalability. The ultimate aim of the project is to provide the evidence base for the development of a new model that can help address workforce displacement for individuals and communities in Canada.

The specific objectives of the project are to fill knowledge gaps by developing LES knowledge to improve awareness and understanding of what works for adult LES — specifically for displaced workers — and to address workplace and employability issues for displaced workers by developing knowledge that helps this particular group of job seekers improve their employability.

This will be accomplished by:

- Reviewing literature that summarizes and explains the current knowledge of interventions and tools being used for displaced workers;
- Conducting a study of displaced workers' experiences and those of their service providers to describe promising practices that will be beta tested with 150 workers in ten sites;
- Developing a Canada-wide awareness and information gathering and sharing network to raise the profile of the issue of the LES gaps of displaced workers;
- Identifying promising practices to build a model to increase capacity and sustainability for evidence-based training and service response; and
- Providing a platform to easily share knowledge, promising practices and resources that will continue to be available once the project is completed.

SRDC'S ROLE AS PROJECT EVALUATOR

As a developmental evaluator, SRDC will be involved in project development from the outset. The developmental evaluator is an active member of the project team and provides research and evaluation methods to support the project's development and decision-making. For this project, SRDC will support Decoda's work as project lead in developing, implementing, and evaluating the DWLES interventions. In addition to evaluation activities (focus groups, survey, key informant interviews), SRDC will participate in launch meetings and produce design and workplan documents that delineate and refine project roles, activities and deliverables. SRDC will also take part in brainstorming and planning for the project's development. In addition, SRDC will be supporting the process for identifying regions where there is a need for DWLES interventions as well as displaced workers who will participate in the evaluation activities.

Throughout the process, SRDC will work collaboratively with the Learning Metrix team to develop research instruments (surveys, focus groups, and KIIs) and conduct evaluation activities, with the Learning Metrix team responsible for data management, including data storage and primary data reporting, in the form of cross tabulation and frequency tables. In particular, the survey will be

developed collaboratively between SRDC and Decoda, then be administered and analyzed through the Learning Metrix platform. Performance management, including tracking and managing interviews, uploading files, and sharing documents will also be done through the online platform.

EVALUATION STRATEGY

EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The formative evaluation aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the implementation successes and challenges of the Enhancing Displaced Workers Literacy and Essential Skills project. SRDC is proposing the following preliminary evaluation questions to guide the background research and development of the DWLES interventions:

- (1) What are the literacy and essential skills needs of displaced workers as learners and as workers in communities where they reside?
- (2) What types of training and supports hold potential for assisting displaced workers with low LES who seek re-employment or self-employment?
- (3) What is the place of digital skills in the labour market, and the skills demands of our economy, particularly for workers who have low essential skills, particularly in the digital domain?

DEVELOPMENTAL EVALUATION PLAN

SRDC's approach to the evaluation of the project centres on activities to be delivered in distinct (yet potentially overlapping) phases:

1. Project start-up

During phase 1, SRDC will perform the following activities:

- Participate in launch meetings;
- Brainstorm project next steps;
- Develop an evaluation framework;
- Identify BC regions where there is a need for DWLES and where the field work can take place;
- Identify potential displaced workers to participate in the evaluation, and determine ways of contacting these displaced workers; and
- Prepare a search strategy and identify sources for the literature review, including media and other grey literature.

2. LES data gathering and analysis

During phase 2, SRDC will perform the following activities:

- Complete the literature review;
- Develop research instruments and protocols; and
- Conduct field work.

3. Beta Testing of Promising Interventions

The information gathered through the data collection activities listed above will allow SRDC to define best practices in the area of DWLES. This knowledge will in turn inform the development of promising LES training interventions. These interventions will be beta-tested as part of SRDC's evaluation.

Once the beta tests are designed by the project team and project partners, SRDC will work with the project team to finalize the logic model to evaluate the beta tests in order to glean maximum information on implementation issues and displaced worker outcomes.

For the beta tests, SRDC will conduct implementation research that will involve documenting the practices, assessments, and outcomes for each of the testing sites. This analysis will capture the experiences of the delivery partners in administering the intervention, describing both the challenges and effective practices regarding service delivery, as well as summarizing lessons learned from its implementation. An evaluation framework specific to the beta-testing of promising interventions will be developed in April 2021.

4. Project Reporting and Dissemination

The SRDC research team will be responsible for preparing research reports in support of Decoda's deliverable requirements. SRDC will prepare the following reports during the course of the project:

- First year report on formative evaluation progress in relation to milestones, which will include the literature review finding, a preliminary analysis of the project's focus groups, surveys and interviews, as well as the identification of promising practices and models for beta test;
- A second year summary report that documents the progress of the formative evaluation progress, which will feature a complete analysis of the focus group, key informant interview and participant survey findings.
- A final report that includes an analysis of the project's beta tests, a summary of the formative evaluation, as well as lessons learned on optimal programming for displaced workers in Canada.

DATA COLLECTION

The developmental evaluation will utilize qualitative and quantitative data sources to answer the evaluation's key research questions. Data collection will take place throughout the project, and the SRDC team will iterate its collection strategies to ensure later data collection builds on knowledge already gained. SRDC's proposed data collection will include the following data sources:

Literature review

In order to determine the current state of knowledge of interventions and tools used with displaced workers, SRDC will conduct a comprehensive literature review of the academic and grey literature. This literature review will provide a wide-ranging examination of the literature on effective interventions associated with improved outcomes for displaced workers in Canadian and other international contexts that are applicable to Canada. The literature review will include scans of sources from academic databases as well as grey literature from Decoda, government, the education sector, and the business sectors from both domestic and international sources in both official languages. The purpose of the literature review is to provide a comprehensive yet accessible identification and assessment of effective interventions and related tools that have been shown to enhance programming and improve outcomes for displaced workers. The search strategy for the literature review is presented in Appendix A.

Focus groups

Focus groups will explore displaced workers' experiences with retraining, prior learning assessment, views on the relative importance of retraining, digital literacy skills, and job seeking in general. The focus groups will enable the team to conduct an in-depth exploration of the key questions and themes that emerge through the literature review, sector survey and consultation process. SRDC will organize at least twelve focus groups in at least six different locations in BC and other locations in Canada to ensure the research captures a wide range of experiences in order to provide insights into the issues, challenges, successes and factors related to supporting displaced workers to obtain training, certification, education and new or self-employment.

A protocol and consent form for the focus groups will be developed in the summer of 2019. The focus group questions will be informed by the literature review and developed by SRDC researchers.

SRDC will work with Decoda to select strategic locations in BC for conducting the focus groups. Drawing on both Decoda and SRDC networks, participants will include service providers and displaced or formerly displaced workers. Focus groups will be conducted in-person and facilitated by SRDC researchers. There will be up to 10 participants in each group. Each of the focus group sessions will be recorded and transcribed for analysis.

Surveys

SRDC will work with Decoda and Learning Metrix to develop a series of surveys to be administered through the project's Literacy and Essential Skills Database (an extension of the BC Literacy Database). SRDC will assist with the design of surveys as well as the planning of their distribution through Learning Metrix's platform, and will analyze and report on the survey findings. As the surveys will be primarily conducted online, SRDC will complement the data with in-person interviews of displaced workers who do not have Internet access.

The first survey, fielded in May 2019, sought to understand communities' needs for a DWLES program. SRDC developed the survey questions, and Decoda distributed the survey to its network via its email distribution list. The results of this survey were used by Decoda to identify community partners for the project.

Further surveys will be developed to gather data on displaced workers' experiences and program needs and will be issued up to four times through the Literacy and Essential Skills Database involving a total of more than 2,000 respondents. The initial survey designs will be developed based on the findings from the literature review and focus groups, and subsequent surveys will be sequenced as needs emerge, with the first survey to be targeted for launch during the Decoda Literacy Conference. The distribution of the surveys will be targeted in such a way that they capture responses in both official languages and that respondents be reflective of a wide variety of demographic groups, such as women, Indigenous people, and newcomers. The surveys will cover such topics as assessments used, models and approaches, digital literacy skill levels of participants, strategies for engaging hard-to-reach learners, program results and feedback. SRDC will track the representativeness of the survey response samples and advise on any strategies to target populations that may require alternative outreach approaches to ensure their perspectives are included in the study.

Key informant interviews

SRDC will conduct up to 80 interviews through the course of the project to capture participant experiences in relation to literacy and digital literacy programming at different stages of the project. SRDC will work with Decoda to select candidates using an iterative sampling design to capture input from a diversity of demographic groups and displacement experiences, including offline job seekers. Participant experiences in relation to literacy and digital literacy programming will be especially important as these respondents are likely to be missed in the online surveys. The interviews will be conducted in all jurisdictions of the project and in both official languages. SRDC will be prepared to shift the focus of the interviews to address particular issues or research questions as they arise, adapting protocols to suit the line of inquiry depending on the stage of the project.

Interviews will be done in-person whenever possible, or by phone. The interviews will be recorded with permission from the participant, and later transcribed for analysis.

Administrative data

SRDC will analyze all data collected through the project's data collection activities. The purpose of this analysis will be to identify and classify the key features of promising training interventions and supports and identify the corresponding demographic groups to whom they appear to be particularly effective. It will also describe approaches for identifying gaps between skill levels of individuals available for work and skills required for available jobs, as well as the potential impact that training may have on reducing such gaps. SRDC will integrate all data prior to analysis, ensuring that the full program dataset is merged and prepared for analysis, along with the required quality checks and activities. The summary report of the findings from this analysis will inform the identification and development of interventions that can be assessed in the project's beta testing phase. It will also include recommendations for designing the evaluation component of the beta tests in order to cost-effectively gather information about the features, implementation issues and participant outcomes for each intervention.

DATA COLLECTION MATRIX

A data collection matrix maps out how the data gathering methods will inform each of the evaluation's outcome indicators that are linked to project objectives. SRDC developed the project's data collection matrix from information gleaned in the RFP and Decoda's project activities.

Table 1 Data collection matrix

Outcomes	Outputs	Objectives	Indicators	Data gathering methods
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased capacity for LES inquiry and experimentation ▪ Increased understanding of a variety of promising models or ways to support displaced workers in transition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased knowledge on promising interventions and tools for displaced workers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Determine current knowledge of interventions and tools being used with displaced workers ▪ Identify promising DWLES interventions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planned and unplanned job losses ▪ Level of digital and essential skills ▪ Rural, urban, hard to reach communities ▪ Employability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Literature review
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increased knowledge of the challenges experienced by displaced workers ▪ Increased knowledge in the gaps and successes of current LES supports and training for displaced workers ▪ Increased knowledge of the employment outcomes of displaced workers who have participated in LES training programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Delineate individual experiences with literacy and essential skills programs ▪ Understand DWLES interventions employment outcomes ▪ Identify successes and gaps of current DWLES training programs ▪ Identify and classify the key features of promising training interventions and supports ▪ Identify demographic groups for effective DWLES promising practices 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus groups, KIIs, Survey

DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

All SRDC analyses and reports will be rigorously reviewed and fact-checked by the research team. Quantitative data analysis from the online survey will consist mainly of percentages and frequencies of aggregate participant characteristics, with summary tables to be provided by Learning Metrix and analyzed by SRDC. Qualitative data from the online capture tool and interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis. All of the data collection tools will incorporate the principles of anchoring questions to real-life situations, identifying clear counterfactuals and incorporating harmonized response categories. These principles will support the validation of results across all data sources and support linkages to empirical business case estimates from other studies.

The evaluation team will triangulate the results of the analyses across all data sources to increase our confidence that the emerging themes are meaningful and accurate when they recur, and that they are consistent across multiple lines of inquiry. The analytical process will be iterative and inform further data collection strategies and analysis.

The final phase of the project will consist of synthesizing and analyzing the research findings. SRDC will prepare a summary report that describes the findings from the project's evaluation as well as the models, tools and strategies, lessons learned about the factors that influence employability outcomes for displaced workers as captured through the beta tests. The summary report will document evidence concerning the effects of the beta tests to determine how they worked and for whom they were most effective. SRDC will work with the project team to produce a final report that includes lessons learned as well as a series of short accessible products (e.g., streamlined executive summaries and power point presentations) to support the dissemination and outreach to the project's funders, partners and stakeholders.

In addition, SRDC will support Decoda's organization and delivery of webinars to showcase the research findings with stakeholders. The webinars will communicate the DWLES research objectives, research design considerations, and project findings to raise awareness among LES practitioners, stakeholders, and project partners in the Canada Network. In addition, SRDC will translate its research findings into accessible materials for Decoda's website, as well as support the design of learning materials for beta testing with Decoda stakeholders.

WORK PLAN

Time period	Activities	Deliverable
May-Jun 2019	SRDC develops an evaluation framework	Evaluation framework
May 2019	Development and launch of an initial short survey (survey 1) to identify communities with the greatest need for DWLES training	Survey instrument 1
May-Aug 1 2019	SRDC conducts a literature review of successful LES programs for displaced workers, including an environmental scan of areas where displaced workers are present	Literature review
May-Aug 2019	SRDC develops research tools and protocols for evaluation activities	
Aug-Oct 2019	SRDC plans, recruits, schedules, and conducts focus groups (12+) and KIIs in at least 6 communities in BC	
Oct 2019	Preliminary analysis of focus groups and KIIs to inform survey development	Draft research instruments and protocols (Sep 30, 2019)
Oct-Nov 2019	Main survey development	Draft research instruments and protocols (Sep 30, 2019)
Nov 20-22 2019	Decoda Literacy Pre-Conference 2019 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present results from the literature review • Present results from the preliminary analysis of KIIs and focus groups • Launch main survey • Conduct KIIs with conference attendees 	
Nov 2019-Feb 2020	Survey management and preliminary analysis	First year report on formative evaluation progress in relation to milestones (Feb 28, 2020) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Literature review findings ▪ Preliminary focus group analysis (based on focus

		<p>groups completed)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Preliminary survey analysis ▪ Preliminary interview analysis ▪ Identification of promising practices and models for beta test
Mar 2020- Nov 2020	Second wave of main survey Additional KIIs and focus groups	
Dec 2021- Feb 2021	Analysis, synthesis, and triangulation of all data obtained Identification of potential programs for beta testing	<p>Second year summary report on formative evaluation progress (Feb 28, 2021)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Complete focus group analysis ▪ Summary of key informant interview analysis ▪ Summary of participant survey analysis
Mar 2021- Feb 28, 2022	Activities taking place during this timeframe will be documented in the evaluation framework for analysis of beta tests that will be submitted to Decoda by April 30 th , 2021.	

CONCLUSION

This document details the evaluation approach and workplan SRDC will undertake to conduct a developmental evaluation of the *Enhancing Displaced Workers Literacy and Essential Skills Project* up until February 2021 to prepare the project team for the beta testing phase of the project. During the project start-up and initial data-gathering phases, SRDC will conduct interviews, focus groups, and up to five surveys with the project's partners, stakeholders and displaced workers in identified regions of BC. These activities will allow the project partners to deepen our knowledge about promising DWLES interventions for beta testing in the next phase of the project.

It is worth noting that this evaluation framework is iterative. SRDC will continue to work closely with Decoda and its partners to refine any aspects of the evaluation in order to best serve the needs of the *Enhancing Displaced Workers Literacy and Essential Skills Project*.

APPENDIX A: LITERATURE REVIEW SEARCH STRATEGY

Guiding Questions

The questions below will be used to guide the literature review.

1. What are the demographics and re-employment outcomes of displaced workers in general and with respect to specific populations (e.g. women, older workers, Indigenous, and immigrant populations)?
2. What are current interventions and tools that utilize literacy and essential skills training to support the re-employment of displaced workers?
3. Which BC regions are experiencing significant levels of worker displacement?

Approach, Methods, and Search Terms

In order to address the above questions, we will look to academic and grey literature and news articles and will undertake the following activities to access and retrieve materials:

1. **Online search** for academic and grey literature on displaced workers and LES interventions using combinations of the following preliminary search terms:

Domain	Terms
General	Essential skills, literacy and essential skills, LES, employment, training, programs, interventions, tools, support, assistance, displaced workers, job displacement
Jurisdictions	Canada, province/territory names
Data sources	Data, information, research, evaluation, survey, reports, outcomes, client/learner outcomes
Gaps	Needs, gaps

2. **Online search** for news articles identifying BC regions experiencing worker displacement using combinations of the following preliminary search terms:

Domain	Terms
General	Displaced workers, job displacement, shutdown, closure, downsizing, layoffs, out of business, bankruptcy
Jurisdictions	British Columbia

SRDC will also use Talkwalker, a social listening platform, to gather relevant news articles using a Boolean search.

3. **Review of any supplementary information provided by Decoda or project stakeholders** for possible inclusion in the literature review

Scope

Jurisdictions: The scope of the literature review will be Canada-wide for the displaced worker demographics and re-employment outcomes. The scope for LES interventions will include national and international examples. The scan of news media will focus on BC in order to support the identification of regions for focus groups.

Types of literature: The literature review will include academic and grey literature and news articles.

Years of publication: In order to focus on up-to-date programming and practice, only recent materials produced in the last 10 years (2009 to 2019) will be included.

Language: The literature review will include materials in both official languages.

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