

REACHING OUT:

Access to Adult Education and Training in the Calgary Regional Communities

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Project Description

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In 2007, the Government of Alberta established the Roles and Mandates Policy Framework for Alberta's Publicly Funded Advanced Education System. By clearly defining the roles and mandates of postsecondary institutions, the framework reconfigured Alberta's advanced education system in order to ensure greater system accountability, collaboration and responsiveness to changing social and economic needs.

As a result of this framework, in 2009 the Government of Alberta designated Bow Valley College as the Comprehensive Community College for Calgary and region. At the centre of Calgary and region—hereafter referred to as “the region”—is the city of Calgary. Stretching up to Crossfield in the north, Gleichen in the east, down to Cayley in the south, and Banff in the west, the region includes 16 communities with populations greater than 1,000 and approximately 1.3 million Albertans. The College has been given the mandate to act as the steward of the region, to conduct needs assessments, and to work collaboratively with other education providers, communities and governments to deliver the full spectrum of learning opportunities Albertans need to promote economic growth and community vitality.

As part of this new mandate, Bow Valley College launched the Labour Market Partnership Project to assess the labour market within the College's service region, as well as individual's and employers' attitudes regarding education and skills training. The findings from this project have created an up-to-date account of current challenges faced by individuals and employers with respect to accessing adult education and skills training. It is anticipated that discussion and actions arising from this report will contribute to the strengthening of partnerships among levels of government, the education system, employers and communities.

This project was funded by contributions from Bow Valley College, the Government of Alberta, the Canada West Foundation, Mount Royal University, the University of Calgary, SAIT Polytechnic, and eCampusAlberta.

This report was prepared for Bow Valley College by the Canada West Foundation's President and CEO Dr. Roger Gibbins and Senior Economist Jacques Marcil, and Bow Valley College Researcher Larissa Sommefeld. Any errors or omissions remain the responsibility of the authors. The report can be downloaded at no charge from Bow Valley College's website (www.bowvalleycollege.ca).

Methodological Overview

This report is based on a literature review and the findings from surveys of individuals and employers administered in the region between December 1, 2009 and February 16, 2010.

Surveys were completed online or by hand. Paper copies of surveys and promotional materials were distributed in 16 of the largest communities within Bow Valley College's Stewardship Region (see Figure 1 and 2): Airdrie, Banff, Beiseker, Black Diamond, Canmore, Chestermere, Cochrane, Crossfield, High River, Irricana, Okotoks, Siksika Nation, Strathmore, Tsuu T'ina Nation, Turner Valley, and Stoney 142, 143, 144. In total, 578 individual and 131 employer surveys were completed.

Figure 1: Bow Valley College's Stewardship Region

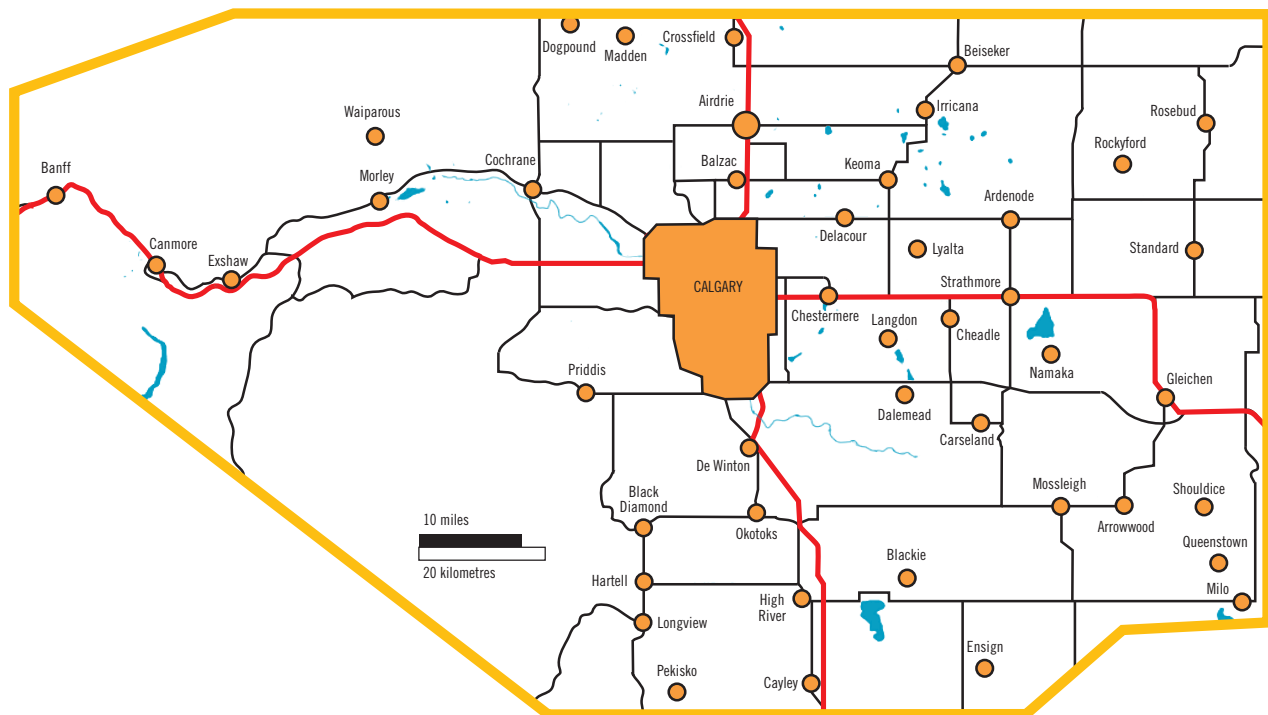


Figure 2: Populations of the largest communities in the Calgary region, 2006

Community	Population
Airdrie	28,927
Okotoks	17,145
Cochrane	13,760
Canmore	12,039
High River	10,716
Strathmore	10,225
Chestermere	9,564
Banff	6,700
Siksika 146	2,767
Crossfield	2,648
Stoney 142, 143, 144	2,529
Tsuu T'ina Nation 145*	1,982
Turner Valley	1,908
Black Diamond	1,900
Irricana	1,243
Beiseker	804

Source: 2006 Census (Statistics Canada). Each community is a Census Sub-Division (CSD).

*Tsuu T'ina Nation 145 population from 2001 Census (2006 data not available)

Executive Summary

Reaching Out describes the findings from two surveys: one of individuals and one of employers, within the Calgary regional communities. At the centre of the Calgary region—hereafter referred to as “the region”—is the city of Calgary. Stretching up to Crossfield in the north, Gleichen in the east, down to Cayley in the south, and Banff in the west, the region includes 16 communities with populations greater than 1,000 and approximately 1.3 million Albertans.

The discussion arising from the report should assist Bow Valley College—the Comprehensive Community College for the region—and its partners (including governments, civic leaders, adult education providers and employers) in efforts to improve access to educational programming.

Both young people and working adults who wish to access education but cannot due to numerous barriers—either real or perceived—constitute untapped potential. *Reaching Out* describes these barriers, as well as the attitudes of individuals and employers regarding education and skills training.

In the communities outside Calgary, the survey identified strong enthusiasm for learning:

- almost all individuals (93%) felt that additional education or training was important for future career plans. In fact, 78% of all respondents were either currently enrolled in classes or anticipated looking for educational opportunities within the next five years;
- nearly 50% of individuals were interested in pursuing postsecondary credentials (completing a postsecondary certificate or diploma, undergraduate or graduate degree); and
- over one third (38%) of individuals were interested in pursuing personal interest courses and learning.

However, despite their strong enthusiasm for learning, there are obstacles that individuals must take into account when making the decision to pursue additional education:

- for over 90% of individuals, **cost** of classes and **travel time** to classes were significant factors preventing them from pursuing additional education or training; and

- for over 80% of individuals, the lack of flexibility in **class schedules**, as well as personal, family and workplace **responsibilities** represented barriers to further education.

One way to address barriers to education is to examine the potential of different learning delivery methods (e.g., online learning, classroom instruction on-campus in Calgary) and the attitudes that individuals have toward them:

- when asked about taking **classes in Calgary**, just over one third (38%) of respondents felt they would enjoy the experience. However, almost as many (35%) thought that the experience would be logistically difficult, and an additional 28% expressed a preference for attending institutions outside Calgary;
- in the region, there remains a belief, regardless of community, that education and training programs delivered in local communities are needed. When asked to think beyond their own personal preferences, 73% of respondents indicated that their communities had a strong need for **locally delivered education**; and
- there was strong interest in **online learning**: three quarters (75%) of respondents were interested in trying online learning—and the majority were able to access the hardware needed to participate.

Cost is the biggest barrier to further education. However, both individuals and employers felt that the cost of education and skills training should be shared, but not shared equally, among stakeholders:

- a substantial majority (92%) of survey respondents wanted to take responsibility for **financing** their education, as long as they also received some government support;
- when making a decision to pursue additional education, over 68% of respondents considered financial **support** such as student loans and scholarships to be important; and
- employers felt that **governments** should play a role in supporting education and skills training.

Employers play a large role in improving the quality of Alberta's workforce. Not only do employers offer on-the-job training, they also provide financial and logistical support for those who enroll in credential programs. The survey found that:

- when considering whether to take additional education or training, 76% of individuals considered **support and encouragement** from employers to be important. Almost all employers (96%) thought that they should provide some support for employee skills training; and
- for the majority of employers (58%), the **economic downturn** had no impact on investments in employee skills training.

Within the region, employers are facing skill shortages. Over half of employers surveyed felt that their organization's capacity was limited by their difficulty in finding workers with the specific skills required:

- almost half of employers (46%) felt their employees faced shortcomings with respect to **leadership and management skills**; and
- nearly a third (32%) of employers felt their employees were lacking **interpersonal skills**.

Improving access pathways within the region is a complicated undertaking that requires strong partnerships among levels of government, the education system, employers and communities. *Reaching Out* should contribute to the strengthening of these partnerships by providing information on the attitudes of individuals and employers regarding education and skills training.

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1. Introduction

How can access to adult education and skills training¹ within the region be improved? This is a fundamental question asked by education providers, governments and employers, and one of particular importance in a climate of skills shortages and public funding restraints.

Education opens doors to opportunities and is a determinant of long-term productivity (Chisholm Consulting 2009, 4). In other words, a skilled and educated workforce will contribute to economic growth and prosperity. In Alberta—a province of 3.7 million people—there are 26 publicly funded postsecondary institutions that offer a wide variety of programs. However, accessing these programs is a challenge for many.

Improving access to education is not just simply a matter of creating more physical space where education is delivered. Access also involves addressing barriers to education, raising awareness of programs and supports available, and working to align the goals of governments, education providers and employers.

The first step in improving access pathways is to determine which barriers to education affect individuals within the region. Cost of classes, available time for learning, campus accessibility, on-campus support services, the admissions process and past educational experiences can all stand in the way of obtaining additional education.

One way to address barriers to education is to examine the potential of different learning delivery methods (such as classroom instruction in local communities and online learning) and the attitudes that individuals have toward them. Providing education in local communities (e.g., through branch campuses) can address the concerns of individuals who feel they are restricted by lack of transportation or available travel time. Locally delivered education can allow more people to pursue learning opportunities that will suit their schedules and circumstances. However, while a local classroom is one way to improve access, it is not feasible—financially or logistically—for education providers to offer all courses and programs this way.

¹ Adult education and skills training encompasses credit programming but also includes academic upgrading, literacy, skills development and personal interest programs.

“The reputation of the school and program is important...The main consideration is good value for the cost of the program...I want to make sure that the courses I am taking will be relevant and recognized by future employers and

Text Box 1: What are the benefits of education?¹

An individual with a higher level of education will be better off than an individual with a lesser level of education: (S)he will be less likely to be unemployed and better positioned to make higher earnings (Berger & Parkin 2009). This advantage is not only applicable to those who hold diplomas or degrees but also to those who have participated in workplace learning; they too are better positioned to improve performance at an existing job or advance their career (CLC 2010). Education and training can act as a protective factor in times of economic uncertainty, enabling individuals to better adapt to changing market conditions. Education and training can serve “as a preventive, rather than a reactive, form of social policy” (CCL 2009, 1).

A highly educated individual is essential to a healthy economy: an educated workforce will fill skill shortages in crucial sectors and industries, thus leading to the development of robust local economies. In addition, those who have postsecondary education are disproportionately the largest tax contributors, providing increased revenue to make government programs and services possible. Employers benefit from employees who have undertaken work-related training, which can improve corporate culture, promote workplace safety, improve productivity and strengthen capacity to attract and retain high-quality staff.

A well educated society can result in lowered societal costs: Social savings (externalities) resulting from higher education levels can include reduced medical costs (such as reduced alcohol abuse and smoking rates), crime rates, unemployment and reliance on welfare.

1 For further information on the economic benefits of education (both at an individual and societal level), see Riddell, W. Craig. 2006. *The Impact of Education on Economic and Social Outcomes: An Overview of Recent Advances in Economics*. Canadian Policy Research Network.

Another way to extend access to learning is through the Internet. An increasing number of education providers are offering courses and programs online. Primarily targeted (but not limited to) adult learners, online learning does not require travel to a delivery site and offers benefits such as flexible course schedules. Considered to be an important part of the postsecondary system in Alberta, online learning still has its limitations. Online learning cannot replace human contact or physical learning environments and is most suitable for individuals who are self-disciplined and motivated. Online learning may not be feasible for those who have limited access to technological tools—at minimum, a computer and a high speed Internet connection.

Financial costs as a barrier to education are often discussed in policy circles and in the media. Amidst a climate of skills shortages, labour market challenges and public

“I would like
to work in the tourism
industry in Banff to
promote the area more
effectively all over
the world.”
—Respondent

funding restraints, it is important to examine the attitudes of individuals and employers with respect to how education and skills training should be funded. In Alberta, cost of education is generally shared between the learner, government and, sometimes, employers. A variety of government supports, such as Canada and Alberta Student Loans programs, are currently in place. Education providers offer scholarships and bursaries. Businesses and organizations can offer internships or work placements.

Employers play an important role in improving the quality of Alberta's workforce. Not only do employers provide on-the-job training, they also provide financial and logistical support for employees who enroll in credential programs. Through these supports, employers strengthen access pathways to adult education and skills training.

An ongoing challenge is ensuring that the needs of employers match the educational interests of individuals. A misalignment can arise if the needs of employers and industries do not fit the skills, educational and occupational interests of individuals. In the long run, the lack of an appropriately skilled workforce will limit the region's potential economic growth.

Studies that focus on access to education in traditional urban centres such as Calgary cannot be fully applied to the region as a whole. There is a gap in knowledge about the needs and attitudes of individuals and employers in smaller communities. Those living in the communities outside Calgary may face different barriers to education and training and have different attitudes and opinions regarding learning methods than their metropolitan counterparts. *Reaching Out* is intended to fill in this knowledge gap by asking essential questions related to educational access (see Figure 3). The answers to these questions will help strengthen educational programming and delivery in communities within the region, as well as provide a starting point from which further research can be conducted.

Figure 3: Questions surrounding access to education in the communities outside Calgary



2. What are the major barriers to accessing adult education in the Calgary regional communities?

Education enables individuals to succeed. However, though there may be a strong interest in obtaining additional education, a number of elements must be taken into account when making a decision to pursue further learning. These potential barriers can be broadly categorized as cost of classes, available time for learning, campus accessibility, on-campus support services, and the admissions process (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: (...) how significant might each of the following be in preventing you from pursuing additional education or training in the future?²

Category of Barrier	Rank No.	Barrier	% of respondents who answered very or somewhat significant
Cost of classes	1	Cost of classes	95
Campus accessibility	2	Travel time to classes	91
	6	Parking and transit concerns	65
Available time for learning	3	Lack of flexibility in class schedules	89
	4	Personal commitments and family responsibilities	89
	5	Workplace responsibilities	84
Admissions process	7	Registration and admission process too complicated	46
	8	Lack of prerequisites	45
	14	Lack of necessary language skills	18
On-campus support services	9	Security concerns	31
	10	Lack of support for cultural diversity	27
	11	Lack of access to child care	26
	13	Lack of support for persons with disabilities	26
Other	12	Negative educational experiences in the past	26

² For ease of analysis, some of the barriers listed in the questionnaire have been grouped into several key categories: campus accessibility, available time for learning, the admissions process, and on-campus support services.

“I have two

kids and I am a single mom, so timing for education should coincide with my kids’ schedule...I need financial help. We are a low-income family struggling to make ends meet.”

—Respondent

Cost of classes

When making a decision to pursue further learning, individuals must consider whether it is financially feasible. Any relinquished earnings during the study period (an opportunity cost)³ must be considered along with tuition.

Cost of classes is the most common barrier to further education. Nearly all survey respondents (95%)—irrespective of age, educational background or community—considered the cost of classes to be a significant barrier to the pursuit of additional education or training.

Available time for learning

Finding time to pursue further education can be challenging. Time is an important factor for potential learners living in communities outside Calgary. The majority of the region’s education providers are located in Calgary (e.g., Bow Valley College, SAIT Polytechnic) and residents of communities outside Calgary can face commute challenges, such as unsafe road conditions or lengthy travel time, when coming into the city. If courses are not available in one’s local community and a commute into Calgary is not an option, an individual may choose to attend courses in a nearby city or town. In both of these cases, learners must travel outside their community to attend classes. Nearly all (91%) of respondents considered travel time to classes to be a significant barrier to education.

Time can also be restricted by personal, family and workplace commitments. Will these responsibilities still be fulfilled if further education is pursued? Are class schedules flexible enough to accommodate learners who have many responsibilities and limited time? Over 80% of respondents indicated that personal commitments, family and workplace responsibilities, and a lack of flexibility in class schedules were significant factors that could prevent them from pursuing additional education or training in the future.

3 The opportunity cost of pursuing further learning includes everything that an individual gives up in order to obtain additional education. Therefore, the true cost of adult education and skills training includes relinquished time and earnings, along with tuition fees.

Campus accessibility

Individuals considering further learning must take into account the accessibility of the delivery site. How much travel time is needed to get to campus? Is parking available and affordable? Is the campus accessible by public transit?

As stated above, 91% of respondents considered travel time to classes to be a significant barrier to education, although not necessarily an insurmountable one. Additionally, over half (65%) of respondents indicated that parking and transit concerns might prevent them from pursuing further education. As shown in Figure 5, of those who considered travel time to be significant, 48% were still willing to travel up to 30 minutes from their home and 41% were willing to travel up to 60 minutes from their home. Nevertheless, campus location matters: while people are willing to travel, there are very real limits beyond which educational opportunities become unattractive or unrealistic.

Figure 5: Which of the following statements best describes your situation?

Travel time	% of respondents who agreed with statement
I am not prepared to travel more than 10 minutes from home	12
I am not prepared to travel more than 30 minutes from home	48
I am not prepared to travel more than 60 minutes from home	41

On-campus support services

Whether or not an education provider offers on-campus support services can be a factor in an individual's decision to pursue further learning. Are there supports in place for ensuring the security of students? Are there child care services? What about supports for persons with disabilities? Is cultural diversity supported?

For respondents, security concerns were of greatest significance: 31% considered security concerns to be a barrier to education. A lack of support for cultural diversity was

“The lack

of disability
accommodation and
money for people
living with disabilities
are major barriers.”

—Respondent

significant for 27% and a lack of support for persons with disabilities was significant for 26% of respondents. A lack of child care was significant for about a quarter (26%).

Admissions process

Applying for further education can be intimidating. In order to enroll in credentialed programs (and some personal interest programs), an applicant must have the necessary prerequisites and language skills. A lack of prerequisites was a significant concern for 45% of respondents. A lack of prerequisites can prevent an individual from enrolling in their particular program of interest. A lack of necessary language skills was significant for only 18% of respondents. However, while this latter group may be reasonably small, it is also one for which further education and skills training are particularly critical because language restrictions can prevent individuals from enrolling in all programs.

Additionally, the admission and registration process can be (or can be perceived as) complicated and time-consuming. Nearly half (46%) of respondents considered a complicated admission and registration process to be a barrier to further education.

Other

Negative past educational experiences can have an impact on an individual's attitudes toward learning methods, the value of education and educational interests. A quarter (26%) of respondents considered negative past educational experiences to be barriers to further education.

There are other potential barriers to education that have not been discussed here. The following were noted barriers that were findings of the survey, but were not significant enough to afford their own category. These barriers included:

- age (older learners may feel they cannot keep up with younger students);
- transition difficulties from one kind of learning to another (e.g., from classroom learning to online learning);
- a general lack of motivation; and

“The validation

process for foreign diplomas is long and expensive. We need more general information and help in order to understand cultural differences related to the Canadian lifestyle and workplace.”

—Respondent

“I have no
form of transportation,
which is why I
would prefer local
[education], which
is within walking
distance... I learn
better when I am in
front of a teacher...
and need classroom
support and
guidance.”
— Respondent

- perceptions of the job market or economy (is the pursuit of further education likely to enhance one's income, job security or career?).

When examining perceptions of barriers to education, a person's age, number of dependents, employment status and gender could all come into play. Here the survey of individuals found that:

- women were slightly more likely than men to consider the cost of classes to be significant. Men, however, were just as likely as women to consider personal, family and workplace responsibilities and a lack of access to child care to be significant;
- there was no relationship between the significance placed on cost of classes and the number of dependents an individual supported;
- generally speaking, the more education an individual had, the more likely they were to consider workplace responsibilities as a barrier to further education;
- men were just as likely as women to consider security concerns to be significant;
- concern about a lack of prerequisites was more pronounced for those who were unemployed, at home family caregivers or students; and
- for individuals whose primary language was not English, security concerns, a lack of support for cultural diversity and persons with disabilities, lack of access to child care and language concerns were more significant than for those whose primary language was English.

Discussion

A recent survey conducted by Ipsos Reid found that 83% of Western Canadians believed that a postsecondary credential (degree, diploma or certificate) would be increasingly necessary to succeed in life over the next five to 10 years (Mahoney 2009). Echoing this sentiment, almost all (93%) of the respondents surveyed for this research project felt that additional education or training would be important for future career plans, and 78% were either enrolled in classes or anticipated looking for educational opportunities within the next five years. This seems surprising given the age of the majority of respondents (55% were between 40-64) and could be indicative of a shift toward an increasing emphasis by individuals of all ages on lifelong learning.

“Courses
cost a lot of money.
When my salary hasn’t
increased in two
years and my cost of
living keeps going
up, it’s harder and
harder to continue
my education...
There will be a need
to pay for my basic
living expenses while
I retrain for another
career.”
— Respondent

The nature of learning has changed. As Alberta’s economy becomes increasingly knowledge-based, there is a growing emphasis, by employers and by society, on continuous learning. The rate of change (in business practices and technology) in the modern age is so rapid that an individual must continually learn to keep up “with the times, with a profession, or to be competent in any given job” (Service Canada 2009). Along with this change comes a problem faced by education providers: does the “typical” learner still exist? It is clear that those engaged in learning vary greatly in age, educational interests, socio-economic background and employment status. It is difficult, then, to generalize and describe an average learner. This must be taken into account when discussing barriers to education—people’s lives are complex, and often it is their personal circumstances (such as a lack of time) rather than institutional barriers that stand in the way of further education.

It is clear that people living in communities outside Calgary do not feel that the barriers to education have been adequately addressed, despite the fact that supports from governments, education providers or employers are in place. It is important, therefore, to address both real and perceptual barriers.

The most common barrier to education—the cost of classes—will likely remain a concern for learners. Not only is cost a factor in the decision to pursue further education, it can also restrict individuals as they choose a field of study or an education provider. For example, the tuition for professional programs such as medicine and law are usually much higher than for other degree programs. Program cost may act as a deterrent to individuals who are well qualified for study, but come from a lower socio-economic bracket and cannot afford the tuition despite the availability of loans and other financial supports. As noted in a paper written for the Scottish Parliament, “choices of education are, in this instance, made on [the] ability to finance education, rather than on academic ability or interests” (Mullen 2010, 7).

Addressing the cost of classes is perhaps one of the most difficult tasks for education providers. While it may not be feasible to provide more financial assistance to students, and while tuition fees are more likely to go up than down, it would be worthwhile to examine the awareness that respondents have of financial supports (such as student loans) that are already in place. This will be discussed in section 5.

In addition to cost of classes, available time for learning is another common barrier to education. Whether or not individuals have time to pursue additional learning is a personal challenge that education providers can only address indirectly. Making class schedules more flexible, for example, could allow individuals who have set family or workplace responsibilities to pursue education in their limited free time.

Barriers related to campus accessibility, on-campus services and the admissions process are likely to be the easiest for education providers to address and a variety of supports are already in place. For example, in an attempt to simplify the application process to postsecondary institutions in Alberta, the provincial government recently introduced *ApplyAlberta*, a new online system that allows potential students to submit only one application for consideration at multiple schools within the province (see www.applyalberta.ca).

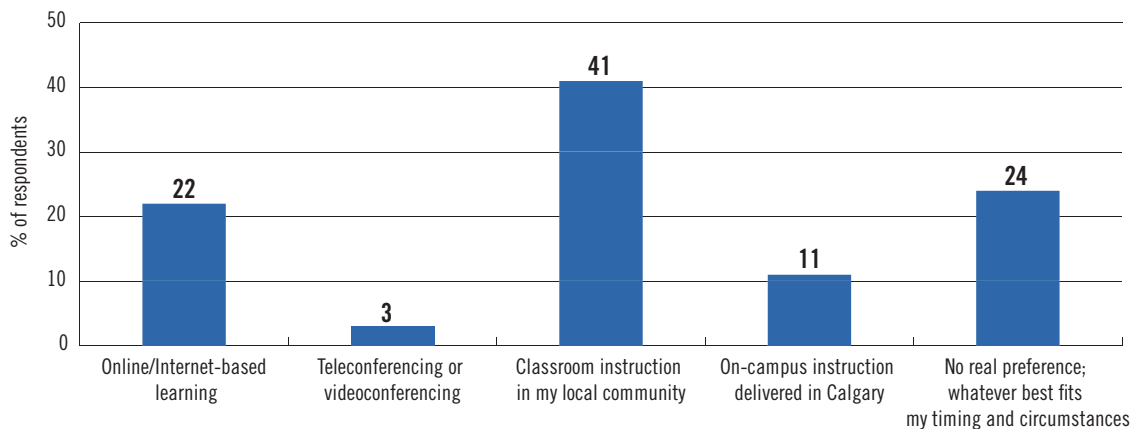
The survey findings demonstrate that numerous barriers to education exist. In order to address these barriers, perceived barriers must be separated from real barriers. Perceived barriers to education are those that can be addressed by increasing awareness of what education opportunities are available, who provides them, what school to work pathways exist, and which student services and financial supports learners can use. Other solutions will need to be implemented to deal with real barriers to education.

3. Would local delivery of classes improve access to adult education in the Calgary regional communities?

Education can be delivered in many ways: online, via tele- or videoconferencing, in classrooms in local communities, or in Calgary. The majority of survey respondents (41%) considered classroom instruction in their local community to be the most appealing learning method (see Figure 6).

Providing education in local communities can address the concerns of those who feel that they are geographically removed from Calgary and restricted by lack of transportation or travel time. Locally delivered education may allow more people to pursue educational opportunities that will suit their schedules and circumstances.

Figure 6: Most appealing learning method



The information detailed above demonstrates the *most appealing* learning methods but it does not measure the level of *interest* in coming into Calgary for additional education. Although only 11% considered on-campus instruction in Calgary to be the most appealing learning method, when attitudes toward learning in Calgary were examined, just over one third (38%) of respondents felt they would enjoy the experience (see Figure 7). However,

almost as many (35%) thought the experience would be logistically difficult, and an additional 28% expressed a preference for attending institutions outside Calgary. The remaining 7% indicated they would feel nervous about the on-campus experience. Those who felt nervous about coming into Calgary tended to have concerns about parking, transit and security: 79% considered parking and transit to be significant barriers to education and over half (51%) felt that way about security concerns. Clearly there are challenges in relying solely on Calgary-based campuses for regional service or education delivery.

“Five years

from now, I want to be working as a paramedic or EMT in either Calgary or Cochrane. Hopefully after that I will be working on the STARS ambulance.”

—Respondent

Figure 7: Respondent attitudes toward learning in Calgary

Attitude toward pursuing additional education or training delivered in Calgary	% of respondents who agreed with statement
I would enjoy the on-campus experience	38
The on-campus experience would be logistically difficult for me	35
I would much prefer other institutions	28
I would be nervous about the on-campus experience	7

Note: The values in the chart do not add up to 100% (see methodology).

The results from the survey found that:

- women were just as likely as men to choose locally delivered education as the most appealing learning method; and
- of those respondents who were interested in personal interest courses and learning, a relatively high 52% considered locally delivered education to be the most appealing learning method. There was no relationship between other educational interests (such as academic upgrading or completing a degree) and locally delivered education as the most appealing learning method.

Discussion

The majority of postsecondary institutions in the region are located in Calgary (e.g., University of Calgary, Mount Royal University, Alberta College of Art and Design). A myriad of programs that include personal interest courses, trades programs and credentialed programs are available from these institutions, yet, 39% of survey respondents considered on-campus classroom instruction delivered in Calgary to be the least appealing learning method. Commuting into Calgary to access education is not an attractive option for most survey respondents.

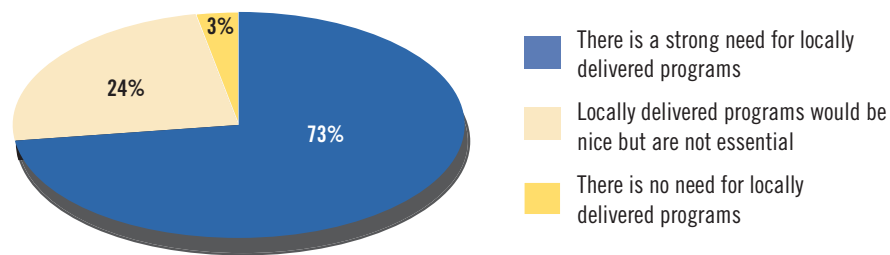
In recognition of interest in locally delivered education, some Calgary-based institutions have established a presence in smaller communities in order to extend access. For example, Bow Valley College currently offers selected programs, such as academic upgrading, in several communities. However, it is not financially possible for education providers to offer a full spectrum of programs in all communities within the region.

In addition to postsecondary education that is offered in communities outside Calgary, the provincial government supports community-based learning through adult literacy programs and funding for Community Adult Learning Councils (CALCs). The Learning Councils were created to address common barriers to education, such as financial and geographical constraints. CALCs provide programs that can include language training (specifically English and French as second languages), family literacy, employability enhancement and other lifelong learning opportunities, depending on the community location (AET 2010).

It appears, however, that in the region there remains a strong belief, regardless of community, that locally delivered programs are needed. Survey respondents placed great value on physical proximity to education. As shown in Figure 8, when asked to think beyond their own personal preferences, 73% of survey respondents indicated that their communities had a strong need for locally delivered education. Of the remainder, 24% thought that locally delivered programs would be nice but are not essential, and only a small percentage—3%—felt that there was no need for locally delivered programs.

“I want to
be working with
immigrant populations
in the Bow Valley
and help with the
integration process
for individuals and
families.”
—Respondent

Figure 8: Thinking beyond your own personal preferences, do you think there is a need for more educational and training programs to be delivered in your own community?



No linkages were found between the preference for locally delivered education and the significance placed on the following barriers to education: cost of classes, personal, family and workplace responsibilities, lack of access to child care or security concerns. It is possible, then, that locally delivered education was desirable because it was simply something that respondents felt was lacking in their community. The drawback of locally delivered education is that programming options are limited because they can only be delivered where the strength of demand justifies their existence. In short, an individual who excludes travelling to a larger community where courses are offered automatically limits his or her education options.

It is likely that expanding the selection and availability of locally delivered courses would improve access to adult education in the region, although to do so would require that logistical and financial challenges first be resolved by policymakers.

4. What is the potential of online learning for improving access to educational programming in the Calgary regional communities?

Technology is changing how education is delivered. Using the Internet, individuals are able to earn degrees from schools located in different countries and time zones, take personal interest courses, and collaborate and engage in discussion with fellow students. Almost anything is within reach of a click of a button.

Online learning (also called online education or eLearning) uses computers, networks and multimedia technology (e.g., audio and video tools) to deliver education. Online learning often allows for individuals with busy schedules to pursue education at their own pace. It addresses the challenges associated with commuting to a physical campus or classroom. Students can have the option to pursue education exclusively online or to combine online learning with classroom instruction (blended learning). Not only does online learning appeal to working adults who are unwilling to put their careers on hold in order to obtain additional education, it also appeals to a younger generation whose lives are closely intertwined with technology.

In the region, online learning is popular: nearly half (49%) of survey respondents had participated in online learning in the past.⁴ Of these respondents, 80% felt that online learning was successful in meeting their goals and needs. This indicates that online learning is generally perceived as an effective learning tool.

Although the most appealing learning method was education offered in local classrooms, as described earlier, there was also a strong interest in online learning: 75% of survey respondents were either very or somewhat interested in trying this learning method, regardless of whether they had tried it in the past and whether it met educational goals and needs.

⁴ Although data on the percentage of Albertans who have participated in online learning is limited, it can be noted that registration in online learning programs has increased dramatically in recent years. For example, enrollment in eCampusAlberta programs increased from 460 participants in 2003/04 to 9,004 participants in 2008/09 (eCampusAlberta 2009, 2).

In order for online learning to be successful, learners must have regular access to technological tools, and this appears to be largely the case in the region. The vast majority of survey respondents had access to the minimum requirements needed for online learning: a computer and high speed Internet. Fewer respondents had access to additional hardware, such as scanners and web cameras (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Which of the following supports do you have access to?

Technological Support	% of respondents who had access
Computer	96
High speed Internet	91
DVD player	90
Digital camera	85
Scanner	64
Web camera	48

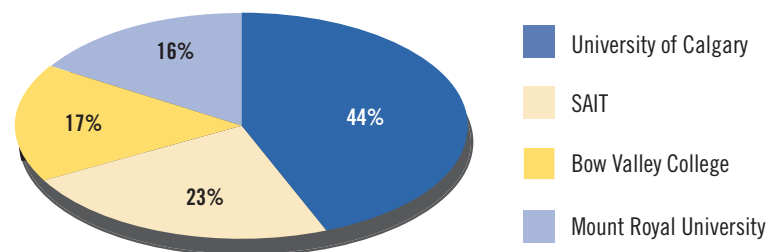
While these findings are indicative of a high level of technological access within the region, they also mean that a technological barrier still exists for some individuals with no access to a computer (4%) or to high speed Internet (9%).

Respondents who had participated in online learning took courses through a variety of institutions. As shown in Figure 10, the majority (41%) had taken online courses through a private company or educational provider. Fewer learners (28%) had taken their online courses through postsecondary institutions in Calgary (see Figure 11 for a breakdown of which institutions they attended). About 27% of survey respondents had taken online programs from Alberta postsecondary institutions based outside of Calgary (e.g., Athabasca University). Only 7% had taken courses directly through eCampusAlberta, a consortium of 15 publicly-funded Alberta colleges and technical institutes.

Figure 10: Who offered the online learning?⁵

Institution	% of respondents who had taken online learning from institution
Private company or educational provider	41
Postsecondary institution in Calgary	28
Alberta postsecondary institution outside Calgary	27
Postsecondary institution outside Alberta	16
eCampus Alberta	7

Note: percentages do not add up to 100% (see methodology).

Figure 11: Which Calgary-based institution did you take online courses from?

When choosing from which institution to take online programs in the future, the majority of respondents (56%) indicated that their choice would depend on the educational opportunities available to them. One quarter indicated a preference for Alberta institutions and 17% indicated that they had no preference between Alberta institutions

⁵ This question did not include the option of selecting public and private school boards as online learning providers.

and institutions outside Alberta. Only 2% expressed a preference for institutions outside Alberta.

It can be presumed that, when choosing an institution that offers online learning, individuals base their decision on how an institution or program will meet their needs rather than on where the institution is located.

As to their interest in online learning, the results from the survey found that those aged 25-64 were much more interested than those aged 15-24 (see Figure 12). There is an equal interest in online learning for those aged 25-39 and 40-64. Additionally, it is important to note that interest in online learning remained reasonably robust among older respondents. There was no relationship between interest in online learning and gender or the community in which a respondent resided.

Figure 12: Interest in online learning

Age group	% very or somewhat interested in online learning in the future
15-24	47
25-39	84
40-64	83
65+	58

Discussion

The Government of Alberta has recognized online learning to be a critical component of the province's postsecondary system. eCampusAlberta (a consortium of 15 publicly-funded Alberta colleges and technical institutes) was created in 2002 to improve access to online learning opportunities. By visiting the eCampusAlberta website, potential students can find out about programs offered by participating education providers and determine whether online learning is suitable for them. This collaboration between educational institutions appears to be successful: registration in online courses offered through eCampusAlberta increased by 26% from 2007/08 – 2008/09 (eCampusAlberta 2010).

“I would like

to be working in
Calgary, in the field
of Human Resources.
Recruitment,
Career Development
and Training &
Development are my
main areas of interest.

I am interested in
various industries, but
prefer the education
sector or other public
organizations.”

—Respondent

Although online learning has many benefits, like other education delivery methods it also has limitations. These can be characterized as technological, learning style and personal limitations (Wong 2007).

Whether or not technology is readily accessible can impact the success of online learning. Students must be able to regularly access the required hardware (e.g., computer, high speed Internet, digital camera, webcam). This can be a particular challenge in rural communities, where Internet use is slightly lower than in urban areas (e.g., in Canada in 2005, urban residents were almost 1.5 times more likely to access the Internet than rural and small town residents (CCL 2008, 12)). These statistics, however, do not necessarily indicate *interest* in accessing the Internet but rather the *ability* to do so.

Limitations associated with learning style can also be a challenge. Online learning requires students to have a certain degree of familiarity and comfort with technological tools. This style of learning, therefore, can be troublesome for those who do not have strong computer skills. Additionally, there is a minimal level of physical interaction between peers and instructors, as the majority of discussion and course material is text-based. Individuals who benefit from face-to-face education or do not have strong writing skills may be at a disadvantage when engaging in online learning.

Personal factors can limit the success of online learning, which often appeals to individuals who have family, workplace and personal responsibilities. These responsibilities can restrict the time needed to complete a course or program. Online learning is flexible and autonomous, but sometimes these positive features can be detrimental to learners. To be successful, an individual must take initiative and have a certain degree of self-motivation to stay on track and complete assignments on time. Online learning can be more challenging than conventional learning and for these reasons, online learners tend to have higher dropout rates than do their conventional counterparts (Wong 2007).

Finally, because online learning programs generally do not take place in a central physical location, some key aspects of a campus (such as a library or bookstore) are usually non-existent. Supports for conventional students (such as volunteering or internship opportunities and career counseling) may not be as readily available to online students (Wong 2007). Therefore, it is likely that online learning will be less appealing to those who place a high value on student supports and services. It should be noted, however, that some educational institutions have made these services available. For example, if

a student takes an online course through an eCampusAlberta education provider, that institution will partner with an institution close to the student's community to provide access to library facilities and student services (eCampusAlberta 2010).

It may be valuable for education providers to keep in mind that 63% of respondents considered opportunities for internships to be necessary for academic success, and 56% considered counseling to be important. If online programs are to succeed, it might be beneficial to examine how such supports can be made available to online learners.

Text Box 2: What about respondents with no preferred learning method?

Based on the high interest in online learning, this learning method could improve access to educational programming in the region. However, nearly one quarter of survey respondents (24%) indicated that they had no real preference when it came to online learning, teleconferencing, or classroom instruction in their local community or in Calgary. These individuals are likely to choose a learning method based on other criteria such as travel time and a lack of flexibility in class schedules.

Among those with no preferred learning method, 87% considered travel time to classes to be a significant factor in deciding whether to pursue further learning. About half of these individuals were willing to travel up to 30 minutes from their home and the remaining half were willing to travel up to 60 minutes. For those unwilling to travel more than 30 minutes, commuting to Calgary or other communities would not be appealing. The flexibility in class schedules (or lack thereof) was also a concern of individuals with no preference: 82% considered this to be significant.

While more information needs to be obtained on individuals with no preferred learning method, it seems likely that they would opt for online learning, teleconferencing or classroom instruction in their local community rather than classroom instruction in Calgary. Online learning might be the most likely choice for this group: 83% of those who expressed that they had no real preference were either very or somewhat interested in online learning in the future.

5. Who should bear the costs of adult education and skills training?

“I believe generous retraining allowances for practical work-related courses are a good investment if they lead to measurable increases in employment and self-reliance. However, I am in a position to pay, so I believe I should pay for courses I want to take.”
— Respondent

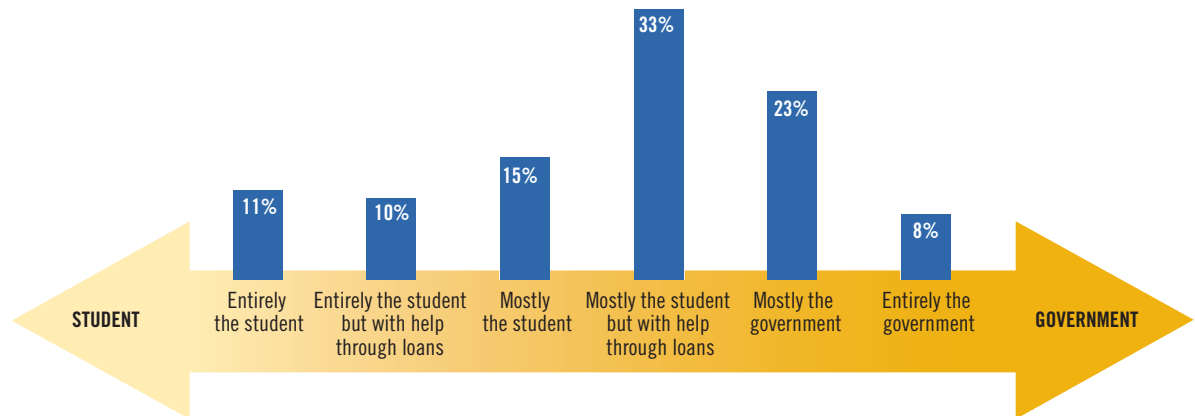
Although funding additional education and training is often an individual responsibility, the financial burden can be lessened by a variety of supports. Governments can provide support through student loans and grants. Educational institutions can offer scholarships and bursaries. Employers can cover the costs of skills training. Additionally, some employers may provide financial assistance or flexible scheduling for employees seeking to earn education or training credentials. Employers can also partner with governments or educational institutions to offer work placements or internships. Therefore, the financial responsibility of adult education and skills training is shared among these stakeholders.

Attitudes of Individuals on the Cost of Adult Education and Skills Training

Almost all respondents considered cost to be a barrier to additional education. However, the majority would be willing to assume most of the responsibility for overcoming that barrier.

Over half of respondents (59%) thought that the student should be mostly responsible for financing education (the degree of responsibility varies among respondents, as shown in Figure 13). Of the remaining respondents, nearly a quarter (23%) felt that the government should be mostly responsible, although they still thought that some costs should fall on the student. Only a small percentage (8%) thought that the government should be solely responsible for financing education. Therefore, a substantial majority of respondents wanted to take responsibility for financing their education, as long as they received some government support.

Figure 13: Who should cover the cost and associated fees for courses?⁶



Supports Needed to Succeed

As demonstrated in Figure 14, when considering whether to take additional education or training, 76% of individuals considered support and encouragement from employers to be important. Support from an employer can include flexible work hours, financial assistance or time off with pay. Encouragement can also be important: is the employer supportive of his/her employee who is hoping to pursue additional education? As described in Section 2, 84% of survey respondents considered workplace responsibilities to be a barrier to further education. Both of these findings demonstrate the importance placed on workplace support for employees hoping to build skills or obtain credentials.

Financial supports such as student loans and scholarships were also considered important by the majority of respondents (over 68%). The overall awareness of student loan programs was high: 76% were aware of Alberta Student Loans and 70% were aware of Canada Student Loans. Awareness of Employment Insurance support for unemployed individuals pursuing schooling was high: 69% of respondents indicated they were aware of this program. There was low awareness, however, of the Alberta Works Program.

⁶ This question focused solely on the role of students and governments in financing further education. It did not address attitudes regarding the role that employers should play in financing education and training.

Designed to provide financial assistance to those who are unemployed or low-income, only 47% of respondents were aware of this program. Awareness of these programs was not related to age, gender, or educational status.

Supports such as internships and work placements allow individuals to gain valuable work experience. Over 60% of respondents thought both internships and work placements to be important when considering whether to take additional education or training. Counseling support was considered important by 56% of respondents. Child care support was of the least importance: only 29% of respondents considered it an important factor when making a decision to pursue additional education.

Figure 14: How important would the following be in considering whether to take additional education or training in the future?

Support	% of respondents who considered support important
Support and encouragement from my employer	76
Scholarships	75
Student loans	69
Internships	63
Work placements	62
Counseling support	56
Child care	29

“Work experience and internships are really important in preparing students for future employment.”
—Respondent

Attitudes of Employers on Costs of Adult Education and Skills Training

Up until this point, we have focused on describing the findings from the survey of individuals. However, employers within the region completed a separate survey designed to assess their views regarding employee skills training.

Employers can provide assistance for both skills training and the pursuit of credential programs. For employers, costs include not only tuition but also the time that an employee takes away from their job.

Skills Training

Most employers (45%) thought that the employer should provide some financial contribution for skills training. One third thought the employer should cover all costs, 16% thought that the employer should provide time-off for employees, and only 6% thought that they should not be responsible for any of the cost (see Figure 15). This demonstrates a willingness of employers to take some responsibility for ensuring skills training is provided to their employees.

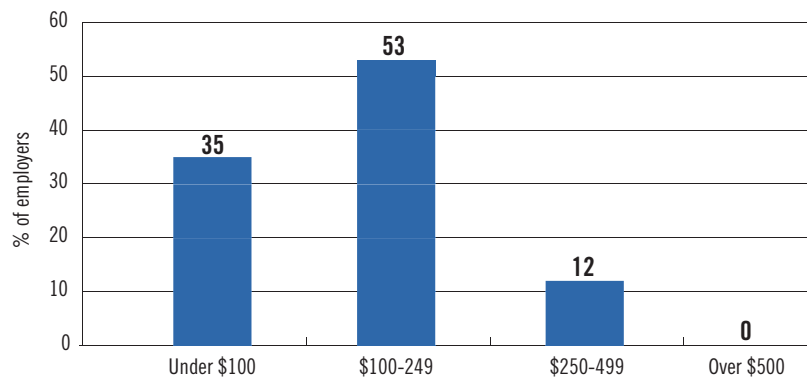
Figure 15: Employer attitudes on support for employee skills training

Support provided by employer for skills training	% of employers
The employer should cover all costs	33
The employer should provide some financial contribution	45
The employer should provide time-off for employees pursuing skills training	16
The employer should not be responsible for any of the costs	6

Additionally, most employers (66%) thought that skills training should occur during work hours. Only a quarter (28%) thought that skills training should occur outside work hours, and 6% thought skills training should occur both during and outside work hours.

When employers were asked to indicate a reasonable tuition cost for a one-day employee training session excluding meals, over one third (35%) felt that under \$100 per employee was reasonable. However, the majority (53%) said that between \$100-249 was reasonable (see Figure 16). No employers were willing to pay over \$500 per day in tuition.

Figure 16: For a one-day (8 hour) training session excluding meals, what do you consider to be a reasonable tuition cost per participating employee?



Employers' opinions are split when it comes to the role of government in supporting employee skills training. Over half (51%) thought that governments should play a *major role*, while 46% thought that governments should play a *minor role*. Only 4% of employers felt that governments should play no role. There was no relationship between attitudes on government role and the size or sector of an organization.

Formal Credentials

Most employers offer some kind of support to employees seeking to earn a formal credential. Almost half (44%) provided informal support (such as flexible work hours), 30% provided financial support, including time off with pay, and 26% provided no support.

Discussion

Many employers currently support education and skills training. For those individuals who were employed, 85% indicated that their employer supported access to training and learning, which is a very positive signal from the business and institutional community.

Both individual and employer survey respondents felt that the cost of education and skills training should be shared, but not shared equally, among stakeholders. The results from both surveys showed that respondents felt that the financial responsibility should

fall mostly on individuals for education not including skills training, and mostly on employers for skills training. Both individuals and employers felt that governments should also play a role in providing support.

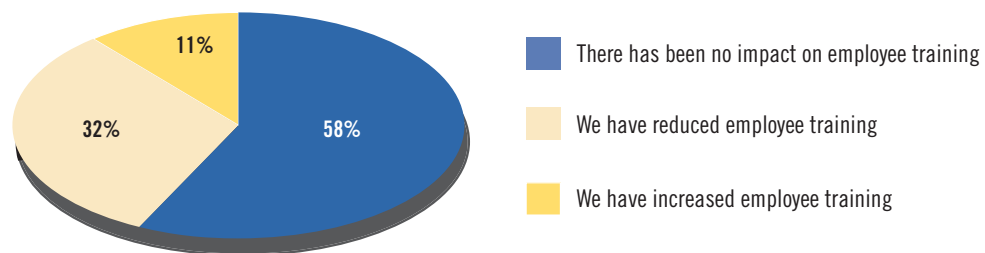
6. What is the role of employers in providing access to adult education and skills training?

Employers play a large role in improving the quality of Alberta's workforce. Not only do employers offer on-the-job training, they also provide financial and logistical support for those who enroll in credential programs.

Half of employers surveyed worked for organizations that had between 1 – 25 employees, 11% worked for organizations that had between 26 – 100 employees and 38% worked for organizations that had over 101 employees. However, regardless of size, a solid majority of employers (69%) indicated that decisions regarding employee training needs, supports and programs were made locally, at the business site in their community. Only 5% of employers indicated that decisions were made regionally, at a business office outside the community, and 5% indicated that decisions were made provincially or nationally. Of the remainder, 22% indicated that where decisions were made (locally, regionally, provincially or nationally), was determined on an ad hoc basis.

Employers in the region are committed to strengthening their workforce by investing in skills training, even if current economic conditions have affected their capacity to do so. For the majority of employers (58%), the economic downturn had no impact on investments in employee skills training (see Figure 17). Nearly one third (32%) of employers reduced employee skills training as a result, while 11% increased training. There was no relationship between the size or sector of an organization and whether or not investments in employee training had been affected by the economic downturn.

Figure 17: Economic conditions and investment in skills training

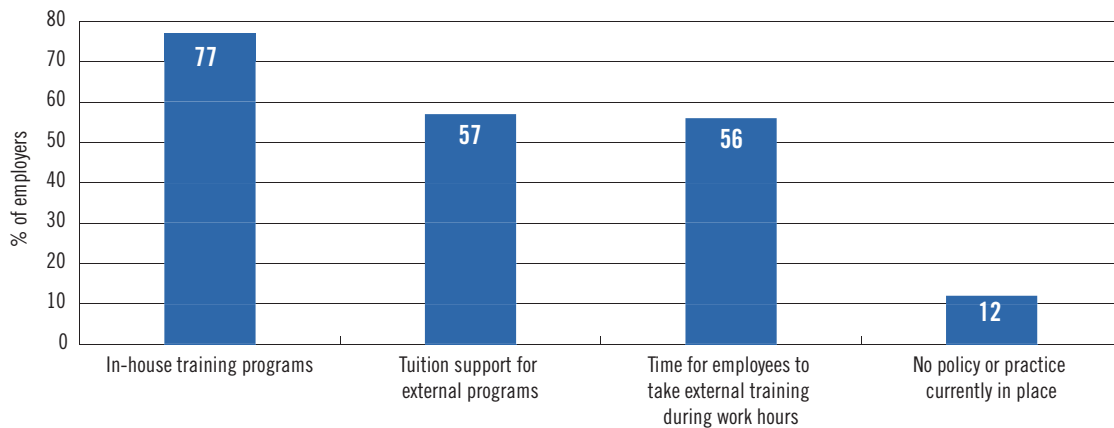


“Five years
from now, I hope to
have completed my
Bachelor of Science
and be entering the
education field. I
would like to be a
high school math or
phys. ed. teacher.”
—Respondent

Employers have different methods of addressing the training needs of their staff (and are not limited to providing only one form of support). Training can be supported through in-house training programs, tuition support for external programs or time for employees to take external training programs during work hours.

Three quarters of employers (77%) addressed training needs through in-house training programs (see Figure 18). Slightly over half (57%) also addressed training needs by providing tuition support for external programs. Larger organizations are more likely to provide tuition support to employees: for example, 91% of organizations with 101-500 employees provided tuition support, compared to 56% of organizations with 10-25 employees.

Figure 18: How does your business currently address training needs? (Multiple responses allowed)

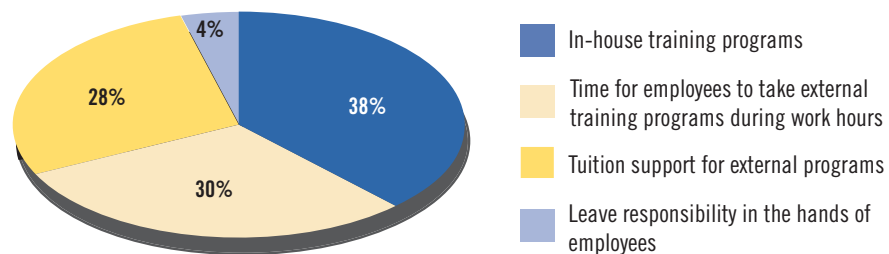


Over half (56%) of employers allowed time for employees to take external training programs during work hours. Although this finding is based on a small sample size, it is of note that this was significantly lower than the results of a recent Alberta-wide survey. In a survey conducted by the provincial government in 2007/08, it was found that the most common support for employee education and skills training was providing time off during the work day: 91% of employers who indicated that they supported employee skills training allowed for time off (CCI Research Inc. 2008, 2).

Only 12% of employers had no policy or practice currently in place. Larger organizations were slightly more likely than smaller organizations to have policies in place. Almost all (96%) of organizations that had 101-500 employees had policies in place, compared to 72% of those businesses that had less than ten employees.

When employers were asked to identify what they would consider to be the best training method, 38% chose in-house training programs (see Figure 19). A similar percentage favoured tuition support for external programs and time off from work. Only 4% of employers thought that the responsibility for training should be left in the hands of employees. This demonstrates that the majority of employers are committed to supporting employee skills training in some way.

Figure 19: Putting aside current practice, what do you feel would be the best way to address training needs?



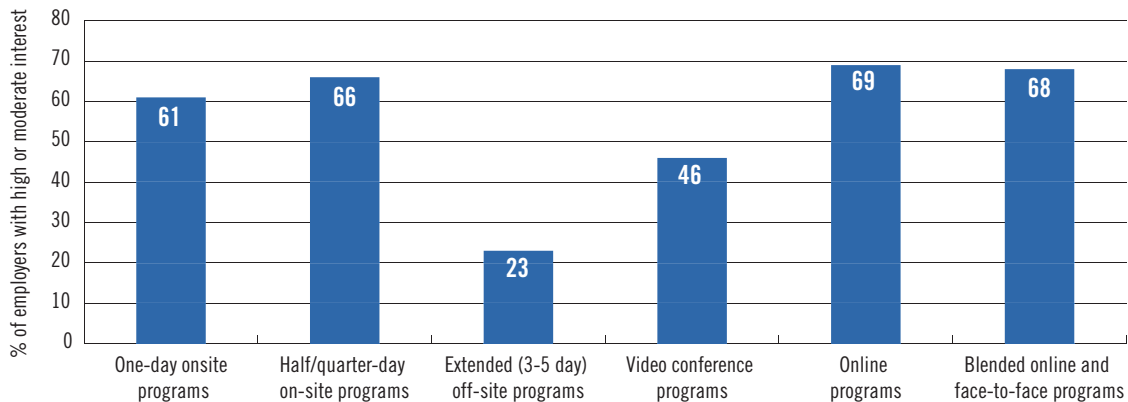
Although organizations may at times require individual employees to undergo skills training, often employees are trained in groups. Group training can be delivered through one-day on-site programs, half/quarter-day on-site programs, one-day off-site programs, extended (3-5 day) off-site training programs, video conference programs, online programs or blended online and face-to-face programs.

As shown in Figure 20, employers had a similar level of interest in one-day on-site programs, half/quarter-day on-site programs, online programs or blended online and face-to-face programs. Slightly less than half of employers were interested in video

conference programs. There was little interest in extended (3-5 day) off-site programs. These results hold, no matter the size an organization or to what sector it belongs.

It should be noted that 69% of *employers* had an interest in online learning and 68% had an interest in blended online and face-to-face programs. When *individuals* were surveyed about their preferred learning methods, there was also a high level of interest in online learning. These data would suggest that online learning options have the potential to address cost challenges that organizations have regarding employee skills training, and at the same time be favourably received by employees.

Figure 20: Interest in group training options



Discussion

The economic downturn has affected employers within the region: nearly one third (32%) of employers reduced employee skills training. Despite the reduced expenditures on skills training, most employers were willing to support employee skills training as well as provide support for those seeking to earn credentials. As noted by the Canadian Council on Learning, “recent evidence shows that employers can benefit from job-related education and training through increased labour productivity, while employees stand to gain through improved job performance, higher wages and improved career opportunities” (CCL 2010, 46).

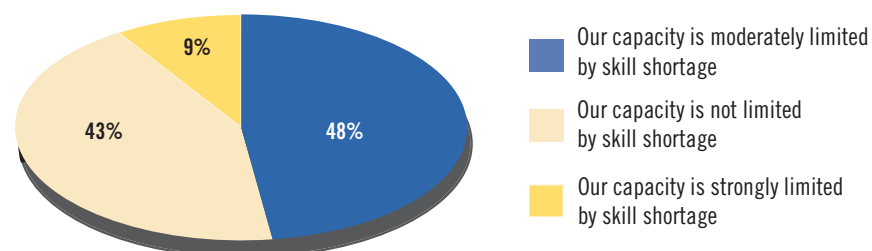
There is a gap, therefore, between the desire of employers to fund skills training, and their ability to do so. It may be valuable to examine this issue further: what kind of support do employers need? What areas of skill training have been cut? How has this affected their organization? The answers to these questions would be valuable for informing discussion on how to best support partnerships between education providers, governments, and employers.

7. Is there a fit between the needs of employers and the educational interests of individuals?

Within the region, employers are facing skill shortages. Over half of employers surveyed felt that their organization's capacity was limited by difficulty finding workers with the specific skills required (see Figure 21). Employers are also faced with a skills shortage within their current workforce, one that can be linked to the tight job market in Alberta prior to the current economic downturn. Facing a labour shortage, employers were then desperate to find workers, and often hired regardless of whether or not an employee was a proper fit. In other instances, a skills shortage within employees may be a result of sporadic skills training—technology, for instance, is one area where it may be necessary for employees to regularly expand their knowledge in order to keep skills current.

It is necessary to determine the skill shortages that employers anticipate. Awareness of the skills that are lacking in current workforces can inform education providers, who have the ability able to forge stronger links between the needs of employers and the educational interests of individuals.

Figure 21: Capacity and skill shortages



Needs of Employers

Some employers indicated that their current employees needed to acquire additional skills in order to contribute better to their organization (see Figure 22). Almost half (46%) felt their employees faced shortcomings with respect to leadership and management skills. This was an area where training was most required: 61% of employers indicated that they had some need for training in leadership and management.

Interpersonal skills (such as the ability to take responsibility or work in a team) are some of the most important skills that employees can possess because they apply to practically any job. Although only 32% of employers felt their employees were lacking interpersonal skills, almost all employers (93%) considered training related to interpersonal skills to be important.

In addition, 6% of employers indicated that limited work ethic and motivation were shortcomings among their employees. The reference to a lack of work ethic is not new. In the Government of Alberta's biennial survey of provincial employers, it was found that employers considered recent high school and postsecondary graduates to be lacking an appropriate work ethic (CCI Research Inc. 2008, 2). This lack of interpersonal skills and work ethic can be related to the age and/or limited experience of workers.

Figure 22: Skills shortcomings in current workforce

Skills shortcoming	% of employers who thought employees faced shortcomings in skills area
Leadership and management skills	46
Technology skills	37
Interpersonal skills	32
Sales and customer service	31
Administrative and financial skills	27
Trades and operational skills	26
Safety awareness	20
Verbal language skills	20
Basic skills such as math and reading	13

A lack of technology-related skills was another shortcoming of employees. Although less than half of employers (37%) indicated that their employees faced gaps with respect to technology skills, 84% of employers nevertheless thought that technology training was important. Technological training is likely to remain vital as the nature of technology is constantly changing.

Figure 23: Current training needs

Training need	% of employers who had a high or moderate need for training
Management/administration	61
Sales and services	53
Information technology	52
Human resources	43
Public relations/communications	39
Mainline company operations	33
Maintenance	21

Figure 24: Importance placed on training needs

Training Need	% of employers who considered training need either very or somewhat important
Personal skills (team work, taking responsibility)	93
Safety	84
Technology (including websites)	84
Basic skills (e.g., math)	66
Diversity training	60
Language training (including English as a second language)	53
Cross-cultural training	53

Educational Interests of Individuals

As described in Section 2, almost all individual survey respondents (93%) felt that additional education or training was important for future career plans. In fact, 78% were either enrolled in classes at the time of the survey or they anticipated looking for educational opportunities within the next five years. It is clear, then, that the majority have made the link between future career plans and further education.

The educational interests of respondents were varied, as shown in Figure 25. Nearly 50% of respondents were interested in pursuing postsecondary credentials (completing a postsecondary certificate or diploma, undergraduate or graduate degree). This shows good awareness of today's labour market requirements: it has been anticipated that 70% of newly created jobs in Alberta will require postsecondary education (AET 2007, 3). Fewer respondents were interested in acquiring basic skills and academic upgrading (12%) or in completing a Grade 12 diploma (10%).

Figure 25: Educational interests of respondents (Multiple responses allowed)

Educational Interest	% of respondents interested
Personal interest courses and learning	38
Completing a postsecondary certificate or diploma program	25
Completing a graduate university degree	14
Acquiring basic skills and academic upgrading	12
Completing my Grade 12 diploma	10
Completing an undergraduate postsecondary degree	9
None of the above apply to me	4

Non-credit personal interest courses and learning were appealing to over one third of individual respondents (38%).⁷ (It should be kept in mind that 62% of individual survey

⁷ An expressed interest in personal learning courses does not necessarily indicate that individuals within the region were disinterested in pursuing credentialed programs.

respondents already had a minimum of a college, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma, and of these individuals, 80% were employed full-time.) Interest in personal learning was higher for those between the ages of 15-64 (38% were interested) than for those who were 65 years of age or older (21% were interested). Interest in personal interest courses, basic skills and upgrading and degree programs was not related to gender.

When asked to indicate what kind of education or training programs would be of greatest interest to them, 24% of respondents indicated that they would be interested in taking computer skills programs within the next three years. This is an important link that can be made with the employer need for employees with technological training that was described at the beginning of this section.

It is difficult to determine whether there is a fit between the needs of employers and the educational interests of individuals. What is clear, however, is that the majority of individual respondents were interested in pursuing further education. Apparently, individuals know that certain skills or education must to be obtained in order to improve a current career or career prospects. Individuals are willing to continue learning—a cause for optimism for employers dealing with skill shortages.

Text Box 3: Is there a match between the interests of individuals and the needs of industries in Alberta?

In addition to attempting to match the educational interests of individuals to the needs of employers, it is important to examine whether there is a match between the interests of individuals in terms of employment by industry and the needs of industries in Alberta.

In five years time, the top three industries that survey respondents would like to be working in are Health Care and Social Assistance; Professional, Scientific and Technical Services; and Educational Services (see Figure on next page).

The government of Alberta has projected that these industries will experience job growth between 2009-2013. Additionally, jobs were created in Health Care and Social Assistance and Educational Services from 2008-2009. Although Calgary has one of the “fastest-growing and largest concentrations of workers in Professional, Scientific and Technical Services in North America” (Calgary Economic Development 2009, 5), this industry lost 12,500 positions from 2008-2009 (see Figure 27). While this dip in available jobs may only be temporary, it indicates that there is currently a mismatch between the occupational interests of individuals and the number of available jobs in this sector.

continued on next page

Some industries are more likely to be susceptible to skill shortages in the future because many of the individuals who work in these sectors belong to an older age demographic and are about to exit the workforce. These industries include: agriculture, management and administration (AEI 2009, 14). Only 1% of survey respondents were interested in working in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting and 6% were interested in working in finance, insurance, real estate and leasing. A higher percentage of respondents (8%) were interested in working in business, building, and other support services.

The mismatch between the occupational interests of individuals and what jobs are available is not necessarily due to skill shortages. Rather, it can be attributed to a lack of interest in a specific industry or occupation. Mismatch can also be ascribed to a lack of awareness of career opportunities. If individuals are unaware of the opportunities available to them, this can give rise to a misalignment between industry, government and education providers. By working together to effectively communicate the opportunities available to individuals, these partners can improve access pathways to education and ultimately, to the job market.

Question: Five years from now, where would you like to be working? What field, trade, or industry?		Alberta Labour Force Statistics by Industry, 2009	
Industry	% of respondents by industry	2009 Employment	Change from 2008
Health Care and Social Assistance	25	197,800	7,600
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	22	151,700	-12,500
Educational Services	11	132,100	5,300
Information, Culture and Recreation	9	80,000	8,400
Business, Building and Other Support Services	8	66,600	2,700
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing	6	109,700	-3,700
Public Administration	6	89,300	5,900
Other Services	3	100,100	8,900
Accommodation and Food Services	2	126,100	12,200
Manufacturing	2	123,100	-21,000
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	1	58,100	-6,500
Mining and Oil and Gas Extraction	1	136,300	-9,200
Retail Trade	1	225,800	-3,900
Transportation and Warehousing	1	103,300	1,100
Wholesale Trade	1	75,700	-11,600
Construction	0	191,800	-13,500
Utilities	0	20,400	2,900

Source: Canada West Foundation & Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey

*Industries are classified according to Statistics Canada's North American Industry Classification

8. Conclusion & Recommendations

Improving the access pathways to adult education and skills training within the region is a complicated undertaking that requires strong partnerships between governments, education providers and employers. *Reaching Out* should contribute to the strengthening of these partnerships by shedding light on the attitudes of individuals and employers.

In the communities outside Calgary, there was strong enthusiasm for learning. Education was considered to be important for future career plans and many individuals anticipated looking for educational opportunities within the next five years. As Alberta's economy becomes increasingly knowledge-based, there is a growing emphasis, by employers and by society, on continuous learning. The rate of change (in business practices and technology) in the modern age is so rapid that an individual must continually learn to keep up "with the times, with a profession, or to be competent in any given job" (Service Canada 2009).

In spite of this enthusiasm for education, including personal interest courses, access to education can be restricted by a number of barriers, including cost of classes, available time for learning, campus accessibility, on-campus support services, admissions process, and past experiences. A major challenge to education providers is that the biggest barriers to education—cost and available time for learning—are also the most difficult to overcome. Financial resources are, unfortunately, finite and although education providers and governments provide supports such as loans, bursaries and scholarships, it can never be enough. Whether or not individuals have time available to pursue additional education is a personal challenge that education providers can only address indirectly. Making class schedules more flexible, for example, could allow individuals who have set family or workplace responsibilities pursue education in their free time.

Individuals are willing to explore new learning methods. There was a strong interest in increasing the amount of educational programming delivered locally. Many individuals were willing to try online learning—and the majority were able to access the technology needed to participate. Commuting into Calgary was not an attractive option for most survey respondents, but over one third of respondents thought they would enjoy being on-campus in Calgary. If education providers are not able to make more programs available in local communities and instead want to improve access to learning either online or by

“Learning
helps me initiate
new ideas and
stay inspired and
interested ... I
am retired but am
very interested in
improving my mind
by taking interesting
academic programs
and/or completing
my BComm.”
—Respondent

changing how programs in Calgary are delivered, then other barriers need to be addressed. Making campuses more accessible, for example, is one way to do this.

There was an attitude of self-reliance among respondents. It was interesting to find that most individuals were willing to take responsibility for their tuition, given that cost of classes was perceived to be a key restriction to additional learning. However, although individual responsibility for funding education was the prevailing attitude, some government assistance was expected.

If more people are to access additional education and training, support and encouragement from employers is essential. Employers are ready and willing to provide skills training and support for education to their employees. In fact, they place high priority and importance on skills training. While they are also willing to carry some of the cost, they expect some government assistance.

Reaching Out does not paint the whole picture of the challenges surrounding access to adult education and skills training within the region. The surveys were not able to draw conclusions on specific challenges facing immigrants, First Nations or people with disabilities. We were unable to obtain response rates in any community in excess of 100 and therefore not enough local-level data was collected.

However, our findings do fill a gap for what is currently known about access to education in the region. The surveys have provided information on the barriers to education that individuals face, attitudes toward different learning methods and how education and skills training should be funded, as well as insight into employer attitudes on workplace training and skill shortages. Still, there will be a continued need to strengthen the access pathways to the education system, and understand why these challenges exist—the economic and social wellbeing of our region depends on it.

Recommendations

Improving access to adult education and skills training can represent a planning challenge. Although educational institutions may wish to deliver a wider spectrum of services and programs outside Calgary, and although there exists a substantial demand for such services and programs, there can be mismatch between institutions' desire to launch new initiatives and their ability to do so. While strides have been made to address

this demand, improving access to education programming in the region requires making targeted and manageable changes within available resources.

At the foundation of this approach is the need for more and better research to inform decisions. Some of the areas most in needed for further research or exploration are listed below.

- *Determine the access challenges that First Nations, people with disabilities, or immigrants face when considering and accessing education and training.* These groups were insufficiently represented in this survey and represent potentially underserved parts of the region that need to be addressed.
- *Separate the real barriers to education from the perceptual barriers.* For example, the admissions process is considered by many to be a barrier to education, yet this perception includes those that have not attempted to apply for admission. In this case, an assessment could be conducted to determine how aware individuals are of the available supports such as *ApplyAlberta*, which make the postsecondary application process easier. A push for more education and awareness can help reduce these perceptual barriers as they are identified.
- *Keeping abreast of the new and changing barriers to education as the external environment changes.* Some new barriers can include: older learners that feel they cannot keep up with younger students in some learning formats (e.g., use of social media); students that may have difficulty transition from one kind of learning to another (e.g., from classroom learning to online learning); and students changing perceptions of the job market or economy impacting their education decisions. The extent of these barriers is largely unknown and can have a significant impact on program delivery.
- *Assess the awareness that people have of which local education opportunities are already available in their communities,* such as those offered through community based adult education councils. This can then help better determine whether how to best target what is needed to increase the profile of the existing education opportunities, or whether new opportunities are required.

- *Confirm or expand the understanding of the programming needs of specific communities (e.g., where is there a demand for health care professional programs?) and whether some communities are able to support a greater postsecondary presence.* This can help better determine the kinds of programs that would be successful in specific communities.

Although we are limited by the narrow scope of this survey and low response rates, there are also some specific programming and service delivery recommendations that can be made based on the strength of respondents viewpoints.

- There is a continuing need on the part of the government and education providers to address the three main barriers facing those interested in pursuing further education from outside of a major centre.

1) Increase the affordability of classes.

There is a willingness on the part of the respondents to pay for their own way for their education, however the cost of these programs may be prohibitive for many. While respondents indicate a willingness to take on the cost of education they do expect some support and assistance (primarily from government and employers) to help make this load manageable. This suggests the need for more awareness the availability of existing programs (e.g., Alberta Works Program) and the need to continue (or develop) the financial instruments (e.g., low interest loans, loan forgiveness programs, scholarships, employer reimbursements, paid internships) that would allow for greater overall affordability of pursuing education.

2) Make more local campus in online delivered programs available.

Respondents placed a great value on their physical proximity to education. As a result, programs consisting of at least some locally delivered classes may offer a better chance of success for the students and institution. Online learning offers another means of bring the student closer to the “classroom” and most respondents had both the willingness and technological capability to participate in on-line education programming. A blend of face-to-face and online delivery—or blended learning—could be another efficient solution to ensure locally delivered education opportunities.

3) *Offer flexible schedules and timelines.*

Long travel times, family and work commitments all negatively impact a respondent's ability to pursue further education. These findings again point to the success of more online learning programs, and suggest that shorter term (e.g., one day) intensive classes offering better opportunities for learning.

2. *Reduce the current gap between the programs and opportunities for learning available and the public awareness of these programs.* This primarily involves efforts to increase the information and awareness efforts in smaller centres that promotes the education opportunities that are available, who provides them, what school-to-work pathways exist, and which student services and financial supports learners can use to access them.
3. *Provide employer-focused educational programs.* Employers we surveyed indicate a willingness to financially support and provide encouragement for employees to take training that meets their business objectives.
4. *Provide opportunities for employers to use online learning options to deliver skills training to their workforce.* Our findings suggest that both employer and employees favour opportunities to pursue online learning as supported by the employer. This learning method can provide training at a low cost and with fewer barriers.

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Appendices

- A) Detailed Methodology
- B) Individual (Public) Survey
- C) Employer Survey

APPENDIX A: Detailed Methodology

Source Data

This report is based on two surveys (a survey of individuals and a survey of employers) that were administered in Bow Valley College's Stewardship Region (see Figure 1) between December 1, 2009 and March 23, 2010.

The Praxis Group, Bow Valley College and the Canada West Foundation designed the surveys. Please see the following appendices for a copy of both survey questionnaires.

The surveys targeted residents of all communities within the stewardship region and respondents completed the questionnaire online or by hand. Response was voluntary. Given this approach, the sample is not random by construction and response rates (the actual number of surveys that were completed and returned divided by the number of those sent out) cannot be compiled.

Distribution of promotional material to increase awareness of the survey was focused on 16 of the largest communities within the stewardship region: Airdrie, Banff, Beiseker, Black Diamond, Canmore, Chestermere, Cochrane, Crossfield, High River, Irricana, Okotoks, Siksika Nation, Strathmore, Tsuu T'ina Nation, Turner Valley, and Stoney 142, 143, 144.

Individual Survey

In total, 578 survey questionnaires were completed by individuals residing in the following communities: Airdrie, Banff, Beiseker, Black Diamond, Bottrel, Canmore, Chestermere, Cochrane, Crossfield, Ghost Lake, Gleichen, High River, Irricana, Longview, Millarville, Okotoks, Redwood Meadows, Siksika 146, Strathmore, Tsuu T'ina Nation and Turner Valley. It should be noted that some respondents listed Calgary as their place of residence. Although no efforts were made to promote the survey to Calgary residents, Calgary was listed as a possible answer for community of residence. Even though this report focuses on individuals residing in communities outside Calgary, surveys completed by individuals living inside or very close to Calgary were included in the data analysis. These cases were kept because it is difficult to know whether or not respondents work in other communities or if they are originally from other communities but are residing in Calgary temporarily.

Additionally, the list of communities was not exhaustive (only 33 communities were listed) and in some cases, it is possible that respondents who live in smaller communities not included on the list live closer to Calgary than any other city, town or village.

Employer Survey

For the employer survey, the eligible pool of respondents was limited to individuals who hold leadership positions in local businesses situated (either as a branch or headquartered) in communities around Calgary and within the Bow Valley College's stewardship region.

In total, 131 employer surveys were completed by individuals who work for organizations located in the following communities: Airdrie, Arrowwood, Banff, Big Horn No.8, Black Diamond, Bragg Creek, Calgary, Canmore, Carseland, Cochrane, Crossfield, Gleichen, High River, Lomond, Longview, Millarville, Milo, Mossleigh, Okotoks, Priddis, Siksika 146, Strathmore, Turner Valley and Waiparous.

Analysis

For the purposes of this report, all of the following should be kept in mind:

- Some survey questions used response scales that included answers such as “very significant, somewhat significant or not at all significant”. At times, findings presented in this report describe each answer individually. In order to simplify presentation of the findings, some answers have been combined (e.g., the categories “very significant or somewhat significant” are combined into a category described as “significant”).
- All percentages have been rounded to whole numbers. Original percentages had one decimal point.
- Some survey questions allow respondents to select multiple answers. When this is the case, percentages add up to more than 100%.
- Both the individual and employer survey included open-ended questions. The responses from these questions were coded into categories (e.g., one question asked respondents what field they would like to be working in five years from now, and

responses were placed into categories based on Statistics Canada's North American Industry Classification 2007).

Demographics of the Individual Survey Respondents

More women than men responded to the survey: 76% of respondents are female and 24% are male. English is the primary language of 92% of respondents. See the following figures for information on respondent education levels, age, employment status, region of residence and number of dependents.

Figure A.1: What is your highest level of education?

Highest level of education attained	% of respondents
No certificate, diploma or degree	12
High school certificate or equivalent	20
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	6
College, CEGEP or other non-university diploma	22
Undergraduate university certificate, diploma or degree	30
Masters, Doctoral or professional degree	10

Figure A.2: What is your age?

Age	% of respondents
15 – 24	14
25 – 39	24
40 – 64	55
65+	6

Figure A.3: What is your current employment status?

Employment status	% of respondents
Employed full time	44
Employed part time	18
Student	10
Self employed	10
Unemployed	9
Retired	5
At home family caregivers	4
Disabled or on medical leave	1

Of those who are employed full time, 66% are between the ages of 40-65, 32% are between the ages of 25-39, 1% are between 15-24 and 1% are 65 years of age or older.

Of those who are unemployed, 48 % are between the ages of 40-64 and 35% are between the ages of 15-24. Of those who are unemployed, 25% have no certificate, diploma or degree. Of those who are unemployed, 82% are looking for a new job.

Those individuals who are at-home family caregivers are generally older: 68% are between the ages of 40-64.

Figure A.4: What region do you live in?

Region	% of respondents
West of Calgary	34
South of Calgary	27
East of Calgary	15
North of Calgary	13
Calgary	11

Figure A.5: How many dependents do you support?

Number of dependents	% of respondents
None	52
1	19
2	18
3	6
4	3
5+	2

Demographics of the Employer Survey Respondents

The employer survey asked respondents to indicate the number of employees in their organization and the sector of their organization (see below).

Figure A.6: How many employees does your organization have?

Number of employees	% of employers
Fewer than 10	28
10 – 25	22
26 – 50	5
51 – 100	6
101 – 500	20
Over 500	18

Figure A.7: Which of the following sectors best describes your organization?

Sector	% of employers
Health Care and Social Assistance	15
Public Administration	10
Other Services	9
Accommodation and Food Services	8
Business, Building and other Support Services	8
Information, Culture and Recreation	8
Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing	7
Educational Services	6
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	6
Trade (Retail and Wholesale)	6
Transportation and Warehousing	5
Construction	5
Manufacturing	4
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	3
Mining and Oil and Gas	2
Forestry	1

APPENDIX B: Individual (Public) Survey



PUBLIC SURVEY

Introduction

Bow Valley College, the Government of Alberta, and other partners are conducting a survey of your views with respect to education, training, and employment services. In order to better meet the labour market and adult training needs of communities within Bow Valley College's regional stewardship area within southern Alberta, outside the City of Calgary, the results of this survey will guide planning of adult education providers and the Government of Alberta to enhance access to adult learning opportunities as well as career services in your community.

Information and privacy

This survey is directed at individuals who reside or work in communities situated in the region around Calgary. All questions are optional, and all responses will be kept anonymous. Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time. Once you submit your responses, the data you supplied cannot be retrieved from the collection due to the anonymous treatment of respondents and data.

The information collected in this survey is in accordance with the *Alberta Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* and will be used solely for the purposes of this study, which is to inform Bow Valley College planning and that of our partners to better meet the labour market and adult learning needs of communities situated around Calgary. The Praxis Group is conducting this survey on behalf of Bow Valley College. The Praxis Group will compile the information and present it to Bow Valley College in consolidated form; your responses cannot be linked to your personal information.

If you are under 18, please obtain your parent(s) or legal guardian(s) permission to participate and go to www.bvcsurvey.ca to complete a survey.

If you have any questions about the collection or use of this information, please contact Brett Bergie, bbergie@bowvalleycollege.ca

1. Which of the following statements best describes your current educational circumstances and interests:

- ☐ I am currently enrolled in education and/or training classes.
- ☐ I anticipate looking for education and/or training opportunities within the next 12 months.
- ☐ I anticipate looking for education and/or training opportunities within the next 2-5 years.
- ☐ I do not anticipate looking for education and training opportunities within the next 5 years. ([SKIP to Question 8, on page 3](#))

2. Which of the following statements best describes your current situation (please check all that apply):

I am interested in:

- ☐ personal interest courses and learning
- ☐ acquiring basic skills and academic upgrading
- ☐ completing my Grade 12 diploma
- ☐ completing a post-secondary certificate or diploma program
- ☐ completing an undergraduate post-secondary degree
- ☐ completing a graduate university degree
- ☐ none of the above apply to me.

3. How important is additional education or training likely to be for your future career plans?

- ☐ Very important
- ☐ Somewhat important
- ☐ Not at all important
- ☐ Difficult to say at this time

4. Please identify up to three education or training programs that you are interested in taking within the next three years.

☐ Preparatory and upgrading;
What specific course(s) or field(s) of study are you interested in?

☐ Career Programs;
What specific course(s) or field(s) of study are you interested in?

☐ Liberal and Fine Arts;
What specific course(s) or field(s) of study are you interested in?

☐ Trades;
What specific course(s) or field(s) of study are you interested in?

5. Five years from now, where would you like to be working? What field, trade or industry?

6. If you decide to pursue additional education or training, which of the following would be **most** appealing to you:

- ☐ Online/Internet-based learning
- ☐ Teleconferencing or videoconferencing
- ☐ Classroom instruction in my local community
- ☐ On-campus classroom instruction delivered in Calgary
- ☐ No real preference; whatever best fits my timing and circumstances

7. Which of the following options would be **least** appealing to you:

- ☐ Online/Internet-based learning
- ☐ Teleconferencing or videoconferencing
- ☐ Classroom instruction in my local community
- ☐ On-campus classroom instruction delivered in Calgary
- ☐ No real preference; whatever best fits my timing and circumstances

8. Have you ever participated in online learning, sometimes referred to as distance education?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No ([SKIP to Question 12, on page 4](#))

9. If yes, did your experience include (check all that apply):

- ☐ Videoconferencing
- ☐ Teleconferencing
- ☐ Internet-based learning
- ☐ Other (please specify):

10. If yes, who offered the online learning (please check all that apply)?

- ☐ Post-secondary institution in Calgary (please specify)
- ☐ eCampus Alberta
- ☐ Alberta post-secondary institution outside Calgary
- ☐ Post-secondary institution outside Alberta
- ☐ Private company or educational provider

11. If yes, how successful was online learning in meeting your goals and needs?

- ☐ Very successful
- ☐ Somewhat successful
- ☐ Somewhat unsuccessful
- ☐ Very unsuccessful
- ☐ Too early to tell

12. Regardless of your past experience, how interested are you in online learning at some time in the future?

- ☐ Very interested
- ☐ Somewhat interested
- ☐ Not very interested
- ☐ Not at all interested

13. Which of the following do you have access to:

- ☐ computer
- ☐ high speed Internet
- ☐ DVD player
- ☐ scanner
- ☐ digital camera
- ☐ web camera.

14. A number of institutions outside Alberta offer online courses. If you were to take online courses in the future, what would be your preference?

- ☐ I would prefer online learning from Alberta institutions
- ☐ I have no preference between Alberta institutions and institutions outside Alberta
- ☐ I would prefer online learning from institutions outside Alberta

If so, why would you prefer online learning from institutions outside Alberta:

- ☐ It all depends on the opportunities that were available

15. Thinking more generally, how significant might each of the following be in preventing you from pursuing additional education or training in the future:

	Very significant	Somewhat significant	Not at all significant
	1	2	3
Cost of classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><i>If you answered Very significant or Somewhat significant, who do you think should cover the cost and associated fees for the courses that interest you:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Entirely the student</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Entirely the student but with help through loans</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mostly the student</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mostly the student but with help through loans</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Mostly the government</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Entirely the government</p>			
Travel time to classes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><i>If you answered Very significant or Somewhat significant, which of the following statements best describes your situation:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am not prepared to travel more than 10 minutes from home</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am not prepared to travel more than 30 minutes from home</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> I am not prepared to travel more than 60 minutes from home</p>			
Lack of flexibility in class schedules	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal commitments and family responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workplace responsibilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of support for persons with disabilities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of support for cultural diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of access to child care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Negative educational experiences in the past	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of necessary language skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of prerequisites	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Registration and admission process too complicated	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Security concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parking and transit concerns	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. Are there other considerations or barriers that might affect your decision to pursue additional education or training in the future?

17. Which of the following statements best captures your feelings about pursuing additional education or training delivered on-campus in Calgary (please check all that apply):

- ☐ I would enjoy the on-campus experience
- ☐ I would be nervous about the on-campus experience
- ☐ The on-campus experience would be logistically difficult for me
- ☐ I would much prefer other locations
- ☐ I have no interest in additional education or training

18. Thinking beyond your own personal preferences, do you think there is a need for more educational and training programs to be delivered in your own community?

- ☐ There is a strong need for locally delivered programs
- ☐ Locally delivered programs would be nice but are not essential
- ☐ There is no need for locally delivered programs

19. How important would the following be in considering whether to take additional education or training in the future?

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important
	1	2	3
Student loans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scholarships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Support and encouragement from my employer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Counseling support	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Child care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Work placements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

20. Are there additional supports or services that you or your family would need to achieve your education and employment goals?

21. Are you aware of the following support programs that assist individuals with accessing education and training.

	Yes	No
	1	2
Alberta Student Loans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Canada Student Loans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alberta Works Program	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Employment Insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

22. To the best of your knowledge, does your employer support employee access to training and learning?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not applicable (not employed, self-employed)

23. To the best of your knowledge, are the following employment services available in your community?

	Yes	No	Don't Know
	1	2	3
Service Canada Office	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Alberta Government supported service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Private employment or job placement services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

24. What is your highest level of completed education?

- ☐ No certificate, diploma or degree
- ☐ High school certificate or equivalent
- ☐ Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma
- ☐ College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma
- ☐ Undergraduate university certificate, diploma or degree
- ☐ Masters, Doctoral or professional degree

25. In what year were you born?

26. What is your Gender?

- ☐ Male
☐ Female

27. Is English your primary language?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

If no, what is your primary language?

28. What community do you live in or closest to?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Airdrie | <input type="checkbox"/> High River |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arrowwood | <input type="checkbox"/> Irricana |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Banff | <input type="checkbox"/> Kananaskis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beiseker | <input type="checkbox"/> Lomond |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Big Horn No. 8 | <input type="checkbox"/> Longview |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black Diamond | <input type="checkbox"/> Millarville |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bottrel | <input type="checkbox"/> Milo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bragg Creek | <input type="checkbox"/> Mossleigh |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calgary | <input type="checkbox"/> Okotoks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canmore | <input type="checkbox"/> Priddis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carseland | <input type="checkbox"/> Redwood Meadows |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chestermere | <input type="checkbox"/> Siksika 146 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cochrane | <input type="checkbox"/> Stoney 142, 143, 144 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crossfield | <input type="checkbox"/> Strathmore |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eden Valley 216 | <input type="checkbox"/> Tsuu T'ina Nation 145 (Sarcee 145) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ghost Lake | <input type="checkbox"/> Turner Valley |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gleichen | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiparous |

29. Which of the following best describes your current employment status?

- ☐ Employed full time
☐ Employed part time
☐ Self employed
☐ Unemployed
☐ Retired
☐ At home family caregiver (e.g., at home parent; eldercare)
☐ Student
☐ Other (please specify):

30. Are you currently looking for a new job?

☐ Yes

If yes, how long do you think it will take you to find a new job?

- ☐ Less than a month
- ☐ Between 1-3 months
- ☐ Between 4-6 months
- ☐ Over 6 months

☐ No

31. How many dependents do you support?

- ☐ none
- ☐ 1
- ☐ 2
- ☐ 3
- ☐ 4
- ☐ 5
- ☐ 6
- ☐ 7
- ☐ 8
- ☐ 9
- ☐ 10 or more

Thank you for participating in this survey. Your voice matters and will help inform future planning to enhance educational and career services in your community.

If you know of someone else who might be interested in this survey, please have them visit: bvcsurvey.ca

If you would like to have someone contact you regarding any education or training needs you may have, please provide your contact information below as well as an indication of what type of information you are looking for (this will help us direct your request to the right person).

☐

Yes, please contact me at the following email address: Email:

Specifically, I wish to know more about:

iPod Draw

In appreciation for your help with this survey, we invite you to participate in the draw for an iPod. Please find the enclosed draw entry and complete it according to the directions.

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***If you have any questions about the collection or use of this information,
please contact Brett Bergie: bbergie@bowvalleycollege.ca
or call collect 1-403-410-1438***

APPENDIX C: Employer Survey



EMPLOYER SURVEY

Introduction

Bow Valley College, the Government of Alberta, and other partners are conducting a survey of your views with respect to education, training, and employment services. In order to better meet the labour market and adult training needs of communities within Bow Valley College's regional stewardship area within southern Alberta, outside the City of Calgary, the results of this survey will guide planning of adult education providers and the Government of Alberta to enhance access to adult learning opportunities as well as career services in your community.

Information and privacy

This survey is directed at employers and leaders of businesses or organizations that are based or have branches in communities situated in the region around Calgary. All questions are optional. Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time. Once you submit your responses, the data you supplied cannot be retrieved from the collection due to the anonymous treatment of respondents and data.

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If you are under 18, please obtain your parent(s) or legal guardian(s) permission to participate and go to www.bvcsurvey.ca to complete a survey.

If you have any questions about the collection or use of this information, please contact Brett Bergie, bbergie@bowvalleycollege.ca

1. How would you describe your leadership position within your business or firm?

2. Which of the following statements best reflects your organization's current circumstances?

- ☐ Our capacity is strongly limited by skills shortages.
- ☐ Our capacity is moderately limited by skills shortages.
- ☐ Our capacity is not limited by skills shortages.
- ☐ We have no trouble at all finding the skills we need.

3. Thinking about your full range of employees, are there significant gaps or shortcomings with respect to any of the following: (please check all that apply)

- ☐ basic skills such as math, reading
- ☐ verbal language skills
- ☐ interpersonal skills
- ☐ trades and operational skills
- ☐ sales and customer service
- ☐ leadership and management skills
- ☐ technology skills
- ☐ administrative and financial skills
- ☐ safety awareness.

4. Are there other gaps or shortcomings in your workforce that have come to your attention?

5. For each employee category, please indicate your current training needs:

	High need for training	Moderate need for training	Low need for training	No need for training/not applicable
	1	2	3	4
Management/Administration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><i>If need for training is high or moderate, please indicate which of the following are current executive/management training needs:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Leadership</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Strategic planning/visioning</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Problem-solving</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Project management</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> People management</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Financial management</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): <input type="text"/></p>				
Mainline company operations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sales and services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><i>If need for training is high or moderate, please indicate which of the following are current sales and service training needs:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Relationship building</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Negotiating</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Problem-solving</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Product knowledge</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Cold-calling</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): <input type="text"/></p>				
Public relations/communications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p><i>If need for training is high or moderate, please indicate which of the following are current training needs for communications and public relations:</i></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Media relations</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Government relations</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Technology (including websites)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Desktop publishing</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): <input type="text"/></p>				
Human resources	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information technology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Are there any other employee categories for which you have training needs?

☐ Yes

☐ No

(If Yes, please specify)

7. Thinking across all employment categories, how would you rate the importance of the following training needs:

	Very important	Somewhat important	Not very important	Not at all important
	1	2	3	4
Safety	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technology (including websites)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Language training (including English as a second language)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Diversity training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cross-cultural training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personal skills (team work, taking responsibility)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Basic skills (e.g., math)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. If you have any other specific training needs, please specify them here:

9. How does your business currently address training needs: (check all that apply)

☐ in-house training programs

☐ tuition support for external programs

☐ time for employees to take external training programs during work hours

☐ no policy or practice currently in place.

10. Putting aside current practice, what do you feel would be the best way to address training needs:

- ☐ in-house training programs
- ☐ tuition support for external programs
- ☐ time for employees to take external training programs during work hours
- ☐ leave responsibility in the hands of employees.

11. What support does your organization provide to employees seeking to earn a formal credential or degree?

- ☐ No support at the present time.
- ☐ Informal support such as flexible work hours.
- ☐ Financial support, including time off with pay.

12. Has the current economic downturn had an impact on your organization's investments in employee skill training?

- ☐ We have significantly increased employee training.
- ☐ We have moderately increased employee training.
- ☐ There has been no impact on employee training.
- ☐ We have moderately reduced employee training.
- ☐ We have significantly reduced employee training.

13. Please rate your organization's interest in each of the following group training options:

	High interest	Moderate interest	Low interest	No interest
	1	2	3	4
One-day onsite programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Half/quarter-day onsite programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
One-day off-site programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Extended (3-5 day) off-site programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Video conference programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Blended online and face-to-face programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

14. For a one-day (8 hour) training session excluding meals, what do you consider to be a reasonable tuition cost per participating employee?

- ☐ Under \$100
- ☐ \$100-249
- ☐ \$250-499
- ☐ \$500+

15. In your opinion, what forms of support should employers be expected to provide for employee skills training?

- ☐ The employer should cover all costs.
- ☐ The employer should provide some financial contribution.
- ☐ The employer should provide time-off for employees pursuing skills training.
- ☐ The employers should not be responsible for any of the costs.
- ☐ Other: (please specify)

16. In your opinion, when should employee skill training occur?

- ☐ During work hours, with the employee receiving normal pay.
- ☐ During work hours, with the employee sharing the cost.
- ☐ Outside of work hours, with the employee receiving some form of compensation.
- ☐ Outside of work hours, with no compensation to the employee.
- ☐ Other: (please specify)

17. Which of the following statements best reflects your view on the appropriate role of governments in supporting employee skills training:

- ☐ governments should play a major role in supporting employee skills training
- ☐ governments should play a minor role in supporting employee skills training
- ☐ governments should play no role in supporting employee skills training.

18. Please select from the list below the communities in which your business or branches are located. Please check as many as apply. If your business is not located in any of the communities in this list, please choose the closest community.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Airdrie | <input type="checkbox"/> High River |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Arrowwood | <input type="checkbox"/> Irricana |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Banff | <input type="checkbox"/> Kananaskis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Beiseker | <input type="checkbox"/> Lomond |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Big Horn No. 8 | <input type="checkbox"/> Longview |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Black Diamond | <input type="checkbox"/> Millarville |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bottrel | <input type="checkbox"/> Milo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bragg Creek | <input type="checkbox"/> Mossleigh |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calgary | <input type="checkbox"/> Okotoks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canmore | <input type="checkbox"/> Priddis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carseland | <input type="checkbox"/> Redwood Meadows |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chestermere | <input type="checkbox"/> Siksika 146 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cochrane | <input type="checkbox"/> Stoney 142, 143, 144 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crossfield | <input type="checkbox"/> Strathmore |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Eden Valley 216 | <input type="checkbox"/> Tsuu T'ina Nation 145 (Sarcee 145) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ghost Lake | <input type="checkbox"/> Turner Valley |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gleichen | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiparous |

- 19a. How many employees does your organization have?

- ☐ Fewer than 10 (if fewer than 10, please specify how many)
- ☐ 10-25
- ☐ 26-50
- ☐ 51 to 100
- ☐ 101-500
- ☐ Over 500

- 19b. If you manage or own one or more locations in the Calgary region, how many employees are at your location(s)

- ☐ Fewer than 10 (if fewer than 10, please specify how many)
- ☐ 10-25
- ☐ 26-50
- ☐ 51 to 100
- ☐ 101-500
- ☐ Over 500

20. Overall, where are decisions made with respect to employee training needs, supports and programs:

- ☐ locally, at the business site in your community
- ☐ regionally, at a business office outside the community
- ☐ provincially or nationally
- ☐ all depends on the decision to be made.

21. Which of the following sectors best describes your organization?

- ☐ Agriculture
- ☐ Forestry
- ☐ Fishing
- ☐ Mining
- ☐ Oil and Gas
- ☐ Utilities Sector
- ☐ Construction Sector
- ☐ Manufacturing Sector
- ☐ Services-Producing Sector
- ☐ Trade (import / export) Sector
- ☐ Transportation and Warehousing Sector
- ☐ Finance, Insurance, Real Estate and Leasing Sectors
- ☐ Professional, Scientific and Technical Services Sectors
- ☐ Business, Building and other Support Services Sectors
- ☐ Educational Services Sector
- ☐ Health Care and Social Assistance Sector
- ☐ Information, Culture and Recreation Sectors
- ☐ Accommodation and Food Services Sector
- ☐ Other Services Sector
- ☐ Public Administration
- ☐ Other (Specify)

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