

# Human Capital Centre

## 2020 WORK PLAN

### SKILLS, COMPETENCY FRAMEWORKS AND POST-SECONDARY RENEWAL

Competitiveness pressures and demographic changes make efficient development of the skills and competencies of Canada's workforce imperative. There is increased demand for the skills that enable us to work more productively both with each other and with disruptive technologies; and for the competencies required to transform today's industries into tomorrow's global success stories.

In 2020, the Human Capital Centre will continue to recommend methods to identify these skills and competencies and develop them in our current and future workers.

#### Skills and Competencies

The world of work is changing, and the most demanded skills and competencies are often transferable between jobs. Many of the thousands of people who were laid off from Canada's oil patch are now working in different sectors. Many more could be if they and their potential employers better understood the transferability of their skills.

- In 2020 we will examine the need for labour market information, including national occupation classifications to better reflect the transferability of skills in occupational profiles.
- The development of a series of pan-Canadian competency frameworks remains a priority for the Human Capital Centre. One way to achieve this goal is to develop the competency profiles of specific jobs in specific sectors and to amalgamate them into more comprehensive frameworks

over time. In 2019, we followed the development of competency profiles and competency-based assessment and accreditation for three sectors. In 2020, we will document what we have learned about building competency frameworks since we published *MatchUp: A case for pan-Canadian competency frameworks* and use these three examples to illuminate the commonalities and challenges of this work.

- In 2020, the Human Capital Centre will revisit the issue of modular stackable credentials for Canada's trades, to better ensure apprentices have the skills they need to succeed in their workplaces – and to be recognized for what they know. We will look at the progress of Ontario, B.C. and other jurisdictions move to modular, stackable competency-based training and assessment for their apprentices.
- Digital skills are critical for success in every sector. What does it take to build digital skills and create opportunities for people living in rural and remote areas? High-speed connectivity is an issue, but there are other problems that need to be addressed. Can we learn anything from other countries? Are there lessons from other economic development strategies that will inform decisions for policy and programming to improve digital skills and opportunities?
- We will continue our advisory role with Employment and Social Development Canada's committee working to renew the essential skills framework with the inclusion of some of the so-called soft skills.

**The Human Capital Centre** advances a competency-based approach to workforce development and deployment that will allow more Western Canadians and their employers to reach their full potential.

### **Reshaping the post-secondary education system in Western Canada**

Post-secondary institutions in Western Canada are facing an increased focus on performance-based funding, and an overall reduction the total government funding. At the same time, the number of domestic undergraduate students is decreasing, the number of international students may soon peak and there is a huge need to offer solutions for mid-career professionals who are looking for just-in-time learning opportunities rather than traditional credentials and delivery models.

- The Human Capital Centre will examine designs for a sustainable and effective college and polytechnic sector that meets the changing needs of students, builds the competencies required by employers, and respects the resources provided by taxpayers.
- If you believe everything you read in the media, you might think that Canada needs more STEM graduates. However, Statistics Canada reports that in 2016, only 47 per cent of Canada's STEM bachelor's degree graduates and only 66 per cent of engineering graduates worked in the STEM fields. In 2020 we will investigate potential reasons for the underemployment of some of our most expensively trained people, including a persistent gap between what is taught, and the actual competencies required in the work force.
- Post-secondary institutions across the country are taking up the challenge of developing modular courses that meet the needs of employers and offering competency-based assessment and micro-credentialing to students. We will highlight best practices in competency-based assessment and micro-credentialing.

### **Other topics that we are keeping an eye on in 2020 include:**

- A competency approach to economic development: If funding becomes available, we may submit a proposal to identify the competency profile of a region affected by large-scale job displacement.
- Valid and reliable measurement of the soft skills included in the renewed essential skills framework.