

Project Insights Report

ABC Skills Hub



PARTNERS

ABC Life Literacy Canada



LOCATIONS

Across Canada



INVESTMENT

\$264,071



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Executive Summary

Nearly half of Canadian adults have inadequate literacy skills, meaning they have poor reading, writing and numeracy skills that limit their ability to participate in the economy and daily life.

ABC Life Literacy, an expert in adult learning has been successfully offering adult literacy courses in person, and sought to migrate this content online to be more widely accessible to individual learners and other literacy organizations across the country. The developed platform, called the [ABC Skills Hub](#), featured 23 courses and was accessed by more than 1300 learners across the country during its first year.

The online platform and the large network of organizational partners across the country expanded ABC Life Literacy's reach. The project provides a roadmap for other organizations looking to make their in-person training available online, calling for a deep understanding of user needs and a commitment to user-centered design.

KEY INSIGHTS

- 1** 46% of learners completed online course modules, far more than the typical rate of 5-15%.
- 2** 76 organizations created 144 learning opportunities based on the materials on the ABC Skills Hub.
- 3** 84% of learners who responded to a post-course survey indicated that the Skills Hub modules they completed had increased both their self-confidence and their confidence in their skills and competencies.

The Issue

The literacy requirements of many jobs is increasing while new skills such as digital literacy are growing in importance. However, low literacy levels remain a persistent problem in Canada. Despite a growing proportion of the young working population completing post-secondary education, 48% of Canadians still have low literacy skills, putting them at risk of falling behind as job requirements evolve.

Under the right conditions, online learning can be an effective and accessible way for adult learners to improve literacy and numeracy and has the potential to reach more learners in need. But because adult learners often face digital literacy challenges, online learning platforms and portals must be designed with the adult learners' needs and capabilities in mind. Such users will likely need support from a qualified literacy practitioner to facilitate online learning.

ABC Life Literacy noted a gap in Canada with respect to the provision of free, online literacy resources for adult learners. The organization had previously developed a range of learning resources designed by literacy practitioners and adult learning experts that were being widely used in Canada. The courses covered employability and essential skills, financial, health and cultural literacy. The programs' reach would also be extended if the content is put online and made available to self-directed learners, educators and organizations.



What We Investigated

The project tested whether low literacy and low digital literacy adult learners could have positive learning experiences by being exposed to introductory, confidence building, literacy learning content, delivered through the ABC Skills Hub – an online portal. The project further tested whether the Skills Hub would prove usable and useful in helping teachers set up and facilitate classes. Meeting these goals would, in turn, show that the ABC Skills Hub could be an effective learning platform that could be used by service providers across the country.

ABC adapted and worked to migrate 23 proven ABC workshops to a new online platform called the ABC Skills Hub for use for free at home, in classrooms, and in workplaces. Learning modules added to the ABC Skills Hub included:

- ABC UP Skills for Work learning modules in English and French.
- An ABC Health Matters learning module in English and French.
- ABC Money Matters learning modules in English and French.
- ABC Learning at the Museum learning modules in English and French.

What We're Learning

The Skills Hub platform had 1,310 individuals create an account, and of these, 564 people started multiple learning modules, while 746 started only one. In total, 1,090 individuals participated in the ABC UP Skills for Work module, the module most directly related to work and employability skills. Learners also participated in 144 facilitated learning events organized by one of the 76 organizations that participated in the program.

Building confidence

The project measured self-reported changes in learner self-confidence and confidence in skills acquired. In the context of adult learning, this is a key result as building confidence is an important part of the process for adult learners with low levels of literacy. Negative experiences with the formal schooling system, including discrimination and poor access, undermine self-confidence and create mistrust with learning systems. Confidence building is therefore an important part of the process and is built into the pedagogy underlying ABC's learning resources. However, the timing of implementation did not allow for measuring longer-term learner outcomes such as transition to employment.

Learning as a group

While the hub was available to self-directed learners, it was also used by instructors and organizations to set up learning events. One part of the initial cohort had instructor support and active facilitation to support learning. In addition, numerous organizations and literacy teachers created accounts on the Skills Hub, which suggests they were able to direct and recruit learners for the online modules. ABC Life Literacy was able to rely on its extensive network of organizations involved with adult literacy.

Expanded reach

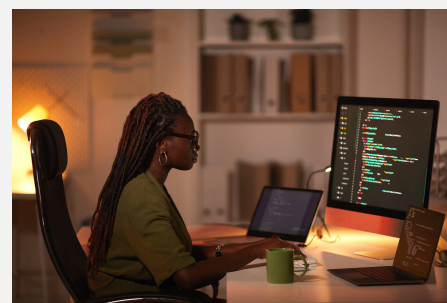
The project expanded ABC Life Literacy's capacity to deliver literacy opportunities to adult learners based on its already successful suite of course modules. Making the courses available on the new ABC Skills Hub made it possible to reach an even larger audience for ABC's learning materials through its network of partners in the broader literacy ecosystem in Canada, allowing delivery to continue throughout the pandemic.

★ Why It Matters

Literacy skills impact an individual's ability to find and maintain meaningful employment, their overall wellbeing and that of their household. As labour and skills shortages continue in sectors and industries across Canada, low literacy rates are a drain on productivity, and limit the ability of employers to adapt to new technological changes like artificial intelligence.

This project provides a roadmap for other organizations who are attempting to migrate curriculum designed for in-person delivery to online platforms. This process is not straightforward, and requires a commitment to a user-centered design – in this case ensuring the online platform is easy to navigate for those with low literacy.

This project demonstrates that the expansion of literacy learning opportunities through facilitated, online delivery, like the ABC Skills Hub, is an effective method to engage both individual learners and other literacy organizations. The project also reinforced the importance of network partners in supporting literacy learning, by supporting recruitment and retention of learners.



State of Skills: Digital Tools in the Skills Ecosystem

There is considerable promise in the role digital tools and virtual career services can play in improving access to training and career development, particularly for those with geographic barriers or constraints such as family care or other work responsibilities

[Read Thematic Report](#)

► What's Next

ABC Life Literacy continues to utilize the [ABC Skills Hub](#) to offer individual learners and other organizations a range of online literacy courses accessible across Canada. The ABC Skills Hub now features 49 different courses.

Have questions about our work? Do you need access to a report in English or French? Please contact communications@fsc-ccf.ca.

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