



*Support Document*

**Learning for LIFE: An ESL Literacy Curriculum Framework**  
CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

## CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT GUIDE

*Learning for LIFE: An ESL Literacy Curriculum Framework* outlines a process for curriculum development in five stages:

- *Stage 1: Understand Needs*
- *Stage 2: Determine Focus*
- *Stage 3: Set Learning Outcomes*
- *Stage 4: Integrate Assessment*
- *Stage 5: Demonstrate Accountability*

Each stage provides in-depth information, guiding principles, guiding questions and helpful resources.

This **curriculum development guide** summarizes the process outlined in each of the five stages.

This curriculum *development guide* includes:

- A **summary** of the stage
- A list of curriculum **development tasks**:  
This list summarizes the main components to be addressed or developed in the stage.
- A suggested **process and guiding questions**:  
This section guides you through the process of completing the curriculum development tasks. The guiding questions are provided to help you consider key elements/factors as you move through the process.

## Stage 1: Understand Needs

**Summary:** Understanding needs is the critical first step in curriculum development. Developing a curriculum that is responsive and effective depends on having a thorough understanding of your context, the needs of your community, and of the learners you intend to support.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development tasks	Process and guiding questions
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct an environmental scan	Think about the context in which your program operates. Consider demographics, immigration patterns, funding regulations and other contextual factors.
<input type="checkbox"/> Conduct a community needs assessment  <input type="checkbox"/> Conduct a learner needs assessment	Frame your community and learner needs assessment in terms of the settlement process and existing ESL literacy programming contexts in Alberta.  Conduct learner and community needs assessments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What are the needs of learners in your community? What settlement needs do the learners have?</i></li> <li>• <i>What are the community needs?</i></li> <li>• <i>What types of programs are currently offered in your community?</i></li> <li>• <i>What are the current programming gaps?</i></li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify your target audience  <input type="checkbox"/> Identify your program niche	Define the group of learners that your program will aim to support. Define the programming niche in the community that your program aims to fill. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What are the common characteristics of the learners your program will aim to support?</i></li> <li>• <i>What will be unique about your program in the community?</i></li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Refer to the needs identified as you develop the curriculum	Use the information gathered in this stage to inform how you determine your program's focus. See <i>Stage 2: Determine Focus</i> .

## Stage 2: Determine Focus

**Summary:** Determining a focus for your program helps you develop a responsive and effective curriculum that guides instructors in meeting the needs of your target audience and the community. A clearly articulated program focus guides decision-making in the remaining stages of curriculum development. The ESL Literacy Curriculum Framework provides guiding principles in four ESL literacy program contexts: *Community Orientation and Participation, Family, Employment, and Educational Preparation*.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development tasks	Process and guiding questions
<input type="checkbox"/> Review the Alberta program contexts	<p>Consider the context of adult ESL literacy in Alberta.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Will your program address one of the existing program contexts?</i></li> <li>• <i>Will it bridge two (or more) categories? If so, which aspects of each will our program address?</i></li> </ul> <p>Refer to the guiding principles for your program context as you develop your purpose, goals and approach.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Determine purpose	<p>Seek input from stakeholders to help determine the purpose of your program. Describe the general intent and broad aims of your program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Why does the program exist?</i></li> </ul> <p>Refer to the guiding principles for setting program purpose and goals.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Determine goals	<p>Seek input from stakeholders to help determine the goals of your program. Describe the specific aims of your program, related to achieving the purpose.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What will you do in the program to achieve the purpose?</i></li> </ul> <p>Refer to the guiding principles for setting program purpose and goals.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Determine approach	<p>Seek input from stakeholders to help determine the program approach. Describe the path the program will take in order to achieve the purpose and goals.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What do you know and believe about language and literacy acquisition, supporting and teaching learners and the roles of stakeholders?</i></li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Refer to the purpose, goals and approach as you decisions about curriculum.	<p>Use the statements of purpose, goals and approach to guide the rest of your curriculum development process. These statements will influence decisions in <i>Stage 3: Set learning outcomes, Stage 4: Integrate assessment and Stage 5: Demonstrate accountability</i>.</p>

### Stage 3: Set Learning Outcomes

**Summary:** Learning outcomes are at the core of an effective curriculum. Effective learning outcomes are specific, measurable, observable and achievable within a realistic time frame. The framework provides learning outcomes in reading, writing, literacy strategies and habits of mind.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development tasks	Process and guiding questions
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify the skills learners need	<p>Refer to the information gathered in the learner and community needs assessment (<i>Stage 1: Understand needs</i>). Also refer to the program context guiding principles (<i>Stage 2: Determine focus</i>).</p> <p>Refer to relevant external standards.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What skills will learners need for success upon completion of this program?</i></li> </ul> <p>Review the learning outcomes in this framework: reading, writing, literacy strategies and habits of mind</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Set a manageable number of learning outcomes	<p>Prioritize the skills you have identified. Recognize that it may not be possible to address all of your learners' knowledge and skill gaps.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Which skills are essential for learners' next steps?</i></li> </ul> <p>Set learning outcomes that build the skills learners need.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Which outcomes will be included in the curriculum?</i></li> </ul> <p>Refer to these resources:</p> <p><b>Listening and speaking</b> - <i>Canadian Language Benchmarks 2000: English as a second language for adults</i></p> <p><b>Reading and writing, literacy strategies, habits of mind</b> - <i>Stage 3: Set learning outcomes</i></p> <p><b>Numeracy and technology</b> - <i>Appendix A (Numeracy) and B (Technology)</i>.</p> <p>Tailor the learning outcomes to meet the specific needs and goals of your program (<i>Stage 2: Determine Focus</i>). Consider the <b>key text types</b> for reading and writing in your program context (see <i>Stage 3: Set learning outcomes</i>). For each outcome, determine the proficiency expected for at each level of your program.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Determine how prescriptive your curriculum will be	<p>Consider the expectations learners face upon completion of your program. Determine whether it is necessary to prescribe content, themes, methods, materials, tasks or assessments.</p>

## Stage 4: Integrate Assessment

**Summary:** Assessment is an integral part of curriculum design. Effective assessment is ongoing and linked to established learning outcomes. The ESL Literacy Curriculum Framework outlines assessment for three purposes: assessment *for* learning, assessment *as* learning, and assessment *of* learning. Learning portfolios are effective tools for collecting and using information gathered through assessment.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development tasks	Process and guiding questions
<input type="checkbox"/> Choose or develop placement assessments	<p>Determine whether you will use an existing placement assessment or develop a specialized placement assessment for your program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>How will you assess learners' oral skills?</i></li> <li>• <i>Will you assess learners' first language literacy skills? How?</i></li> <li>• <i>How will you assess learners' reading and writing?</i></li> <li>• <i>On what basis will learners be accepted into your program and placed into levels?</i></li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Outline the expectations for classroom assessment for your program	<p>Determine what kind of documentation will be necessary for learners when they leave your program. Refer to your program purpose and goals (<i>Stage 2: Determine Focus</i>).</p> <p>Review the purposes for assessment. Determine which will be addressed in your program.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What are the expectations of instructors in conducting:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>assessment for learning</i></li> <li>○ <i>assessment as learning</i></li> <li>○ <i>assessment of learning</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Determine whether your curriculum will prescribe assessment tasks or measures. If yes, develop or outline these tasks or measures.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Outline the assessment management expectations for your program	<p>Review the types of portfolios.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Will the curriculum outline the types of portfolios to be used?</i></li> <li>• <i>Will the curriculum outline portfolio contents to be included?</i></li> </ul> <p>Consider the support that instructors will need in order to implement the assessment approach outlined in your curriculum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What kind of tools will instructors need?</i></li> </ul> <p>Develop the tools (e.g. rubrics, portfolio checklists, assessment tasks) that will help instructors implement the assessment approach effectively.</p>

## Stage 5: Demonstrate Accountability

**Summary:** In effective programs, accountability is demonstrated to stakeholders: learners, instructors, funders and the wider community. Maintaining transparency throughout the processes of curriculum development, implementation, evaluation and revision is key to demonstrating accountability.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development tasks	Process and guiding questions
<input type="checkbox"/> Review the stages of curriculum development	<p>Reflect on your curriculum development process. This reflection can be ongoing. Adjust elements of your curriculum as necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Does the curriculum address the needs identified?</i></li> <li>• <i>Does the curriculum reflect the program purpose, goals and approach?</i></li> <li>• <i>Are the learning outcomes directly linked to learner needs and program goals?</i></li> <li>• <i>Are the assessment expectations clearly articulated in the curriculum?</i></li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Communicate with stakeholders	<p>Determine how you will communicate about the curriculum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>What kinds of information will stakeholders need?</i></li> <li>• <i>What is the most effective way to communicate with the different stakeholders?</i></li> </ul> <p>Develop tools/approaches for communicating clearly with stakeholders.</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> Evaluate the curriculum on a regular basis (e.g. once a year)	<p>Gather information from stakeholders in order to evaluate the curriculum. Evaluation occurs after the curriculum has been implemented.</p> <p>Evaluate the curriculum <b>product</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Are the needs of learners and the community still the same?</i></li> <li>• <i>Does the curriculum address these needs?</i></li> <li>• <i>What improvements could be made to the curriculum?</i></li> </ul> <p>Evaluate the curriculum <b>process</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Was the curriculum developed with input from all stakeholders?</i></li> <li>• <i>Did the curriculum development process include all five stages?</i></li> <li>• <i>Are there additional areas to be considered in the next revision?</i></li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Revise the curriculum as necessary.	<p>Recognize that the curriculum will be more effective when revised regularly. Base revisions on feedback gathered in the evaluation process (above). Revision occurs after the curriculum has been implemented.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Which curriculum revisions are necessary?</i></li> <li>• <i>Which stages of the curriculum development need to be revisited?</i></li> </ul>