

What is new about Skills for Learning in the CALP Guidelines 2020

Below is a list of changes in the new Skills for Learning in the [CALP Guidelines 2020](#) (Section 5.1.3. p 27-28)

What do I need to know about the Skills for Learning category?

The [CALP Guidelines 2020](#) includes a new category in the Literacy and Foundational Learning programming area, called Skills for Learning. This new category will replace the Foundational Life Skills category on July 1, 2020.

Reason for this Change

The Advanced Education CALP Team has heard from many CALP grant recipients that the definition and government expectations of the former Foundational Life Skills category were unclear. The CALP Team found during CALP final report reviews that a number of learning opportunities reported in Foundational Life Skills did not closely align with the definition of the category. The CALP Team and professional development providers, such as Community Learning Network, struggled to articulate the intention of the category in a way that was widely understood, and, in turn, were challenged to support the system to improve program delivery in this area.

The Foundational Life Skills category may have unintentionally given the impression that Advanced Education expected CALP grant recipients to focus on aspects of learners' lives that did not pertain to learning. The new category, Skills for Learning, is intended to remedy these challenges and provide clarity to all CALP grant recipients.

Context

The general population has a much different experience with learning than foundational learners (as defined in the [CALP Guidelines 2020](#)). Most of us rarely, if ever, reflect on the process of learning and on our ability to learn. For foundational learners, however, the process of learning is often like a mysterious black box, in large part due to having an interrupted learning journey or negative educational experiences in the past. By offering learning opportunities in Skills for Learning, CALP grant recipients set out to unpack the mysterious black box known as learning and to de-mystify it.

Skills for Learning is really about learning how to learn and preparing adult foundational learners for the learning journey through a number of approaches that build their confidence and their identity as a learner.

When we consider ways to build positive learning identities, we need to plan the content and activities aimed at helping our learners develop the following attitudes and beliefs:

- I CAN learn.
- I have weaknesses and gifts and I use my strengths to compensate for my weaknesses.
- I am good at learning from my mistakes; mistakes are not the end of the world.
- I have dreams, hopes and goals and I am determined to fulfill them. (CanLearn Society, Rising to the Reading Challenges of Adult Learners Practitioner's Toolkit)

Skills for Learning may be perceived as the most foundational of all categories in Literacy and Foundational Learning. Without developing the skills and habits described in the Skills for Learning category, it will be challenging for an adult foundational learner to participate in further learning, particularly in Adult Literacy and Numeracy.

It is important to note that building the skills and habits needed for learning are lifelong skills. The skill building process does not end by completing a learning opportunity in the Skills for Learning category. An adult foundational learner will continue building these skills and habits in the other categories of Literacy and Foundational Learning, or in learning outside of CALP. But, for some adult foundational learners, a learning opportunity in Skills for Learning might be the first place to start.

Skills for Learning programming is an excellent way to practice the development of other foundational skills, such as reading or writing. However, the primary intended learning objective is about learning how to learn, and developing the skills and learning habits that support learners to build confidence and develop an identity as a learner so that they can participate in foundational and other learning.

Definition

The following definition is an abridged version of section 5.1.3 – Skills for Learning – from the [Community Adult Learning Program Guidelines \(2020\)](#). For the full definition, see section 5.1.3.

Skills for Learning includes learning opportunities that support the development of the fundamental skills and habits of learning that support foundational learners to build confidence, develop an identity as a learner, advocate for themselves, and engage in foundational and other learning. While it may involve practicing a range of foundational skills, the primary intended learning objective of learning opportunities in the Skills for Learning category is to support learners to build the following skills and habits needed to set and achieve their learning goals, be successful in further learning,

and increase confidence in their ability to be a more self-directed, independent learner. These skills and habits include:

- Recognizing oneself as a learner;
- Taking risks in learning;
- Actively engaging in the act of learning;
- Developing learning strategies;
- Building collaboration skills in learning;
- Strengthening communication skills in learning.

Can I pick and choose from the above list of 6 skills / learning habits?

No. If you plan to deliver a learning opportunity in Skills for Learning, it should cover all of the 6 listed skills and learning habits listed above.

How do I do it? What does a learning opportunity in Skills for Learning look like?

Like in the other categories of Literacy and Foundational Learning, Advanced Education does not prescribe how CALP grant recipients should deliver a learning opportunity, or what learning resources they should use. Rather, the department tells them what expected learning objectives and outcomes are for programs delivered in this category. The department encourages CALP grant recipients to be creative and innovative in their approach to fostering the development of these skills and habits.

CALP grant recipients could use any mode of delivery – tutoring, courses, family literacy programs, learning activities – whether delivered in-person, remotely, or a combination of both, to support the development of these skills and habits, and they could use any learning resources that are relevant to the learners' lives.

Over time, as grant recipients begin to deliver more programming in Skills for Learning and the CALP system has gathered more information on promising practices, the department and its CALP professional development providers will be able to share more resources on the delivery of Skills for Learning programs. For now, however, there are a number of programs currently being offered in the Foundational Life Skills category that we think will be a great fit for the new Skills for Learning category.

Existing CALP learning opportunities that align with Skills for Learning

Taking Charge

CanLearn Society for Persons with Learning Difficulties

The overarching goal of Taking Charge is to help learners develop their self-efficacy: to foster positive, and challenge negative, thoughts about learning, teach goal-setting,

provide opportunities for learners to use and practice their foundational skills, make decisions and try different paths to achieve their goals. And lastly, to encourage learners to utilize further adult learning opportunities to support their learning. Taking Charge invites adult foundational learners on a learning journey that includes four main goals:

1. Increase the foundational learners' confidence in themselves and their abilities.
2. Help them build positive learning identities.
3. Talk, read, write and learn together.
4. Promote a greater sense of aspiration for the future in adult foundational learners.

Taking Charge takes a learner-centred practice and strengths-based approach. Participants attend the program once a week over the course of ten weeks. Program sessions are planned to address the key topics that are relevant to the learners' needs. The list of topics are co-produced with program participants and based on what is important to them, but it also reflects key research in the area of self-determination and adult learning.

Potential Best

Pincher Creek Community Adult Learning Council Society

Potential Best is a group program that assists adult foundational learners that face one or more barriers with the transition to further learning and employment. Potential Best leverages multiple topics, depending on the needs of the group, to ultimately build learner confidence so that they can pursue their goal of further learning and/or employment. Topics include: learning journey plan, goal setting and time management, stress management, career cruising / job search / interview skills, budgeting skills, next steps to learning / employment goals, community connections (available community resources and supports), upgrading / GED workshop, and life skills enhancement. Pincher Creek Community Adult Learning offers Potential Best throughout the year, 5 weeks at a time, building on previous skills and developing new goals as original goals are achieved. Participants who complete Potential Best receive a certificate of completion.

SAGE: Emotional Wellness and Employment Readiness

Elizabeth Fry Society of Calgary

The SAGE program provides a pathway to healing and a foundation for Indigenous women who have not had access to learning in the community due to a variety of complex barriers. Women gain opportunities to learn and identify their own potential. The program covers four areas (1) Functional Skills, (2) Emotional Self-Expression and Personal Development, (3) Employment Skills and (4) Cultural Supports. SAGE

curriculum and reflection processes are designed around the Medicine Wheel, an Indigenous model which symbolizes four dimensions of health and the cycle of life.

Group-based Experiential Learning Workshops

Lac la Biche Canadian Native Friendship Centre

Group-based learning is based on a hierarchical theory of personal growth. Each group-based experiential learning workshop builds upon the other to provide the adult learner participant with a stronger holistic foundation from which to gain a better understanding of themselves, their relationships, their culture, and their place in the world of work and education. Workshop objectives are to provide participants with the opportunity to develop greater self-awareness, acceptance and understanding, develop and realize his/her potential self, enhance his/her capacity to take responsibility for their own needs, feelings and behaviors, enhance his/her capacity to understand and respect the needs, feelings and behavior of others, develop and practice skills necessary for effective communication, more effectively resolve problems and cope with change, and initiate experiences that promote lifelong learning, self-development and growth.

Invitation to You!

If you think your program might be a good fit in the Skills for Learning category, please talk to your CALP Team grant manager at Advanced Education. The CALP Team would be happy to profile any program that exemplifies Skills for Learning in action!

Professional Development and Other Resources

Because Skills for Learning is a new category, there are a limited number of professional development resources available at this time. However, if you have a great idea for a potential learning opportunity in Skills for Learning, please reach out to your Grant Manager, Regional Support Staff, or Professional Development Specialist.

As well, please connect with your peers at the organizations listed above, who are already offering programs closely aligned with the new category.

Finally, in 2018 Advanced Education provided project funding to NorQuest College to develop Foundational Life Skills modules for the CALP system, which the College will begin piloting in late spring 2020. The Foundational Life Skills modules will align with the new Skills for Learning category.

I am currently offering programming in Foundational Life Skills. Can it automatically be categorized in Skills for Learning? What kinds of learning opportunities can be categorized in Skills for Learning?

Not all learning opportunities currently offered in Foundational Life Skills will automatically fit into the Skills for Learning category after July 1, 2020.

When thinking about categorizing any CALP-funded learning opportunity, organizations should consider two things:

1. Will the learning opportunity serve foundational learners as defined in the CALP Guidelines 2020?

If yes, the learning opportunity should be categorized in one of the Literacy and Foundational Learning categories (Adult Literacy, Numeracy, Skills for Learning, Basic Digital Skills, and English Language Learning).

If no, the learning opportunity may be a better fit in Community Capacity Building or in some cases, should not be included as part of CALP-funded programming.

2. What is the primary intended learning objective (PILO) of the learning opportunity? Is the PILO focused on supporting learners to build the following skills and habits needed to set and achieve their learning goals, be successful in further learning, and increase confidence in their ability to be a more self-directed, independent learner?

- Recognizing oneself as a learner;
- Taking risks in learning;
- Actively engaging in the act of learning;
- Developing learning strategies;
- Building collaboration skills in learning;
- Strengthening communication skills in learning.

If yes, and the learner(s) served are foundational learners, then the learning opportunity will be a good fit in Skills for Learning.

If no, and the learner(s) served are foundational learners, then the learning opportunity may fit in another category of Literacy and Foundational Learning.

- For example, if the learners are foundational learners but the learning opportunity is primarily focused on building literacy or English language skills, the learning opportunity may fit in Adult Literacy or English Language Learning.

If no, and the learner(s) served are not foundational learners, then the learning opportunity may fit in the Community Capacity Building, or not as part of CALP-funded programming.

If your organization is unsure whether your existing learning opportunity – or planned new learning opportunity – will fit in the new Skills for Learning category, please talk to your Grant Manager and they would be happy to help you.

How are Skills for Learning programs different than Community Capacity Building (CCB) programs that support individual development?

Skills for Learning programs serve Foundational Learners as defined in section 5.1 of the CALP Guidelines 2020. Skills for Learning programs also have specific Primary Intended Learning Objectives (PILOs) that support learners to build the following skills and habits needed to set and achieve learning goals, be successful in further learning, and increase confidence in their ability to be a more self-directed, independent learner:

- Recognizing oneself as a learner;
- Taking risks in learning;
- Actively engaging in the act of learning;
- Developing learning strategies;
- Building collaboration skills in learning;
- Strengthening communication skills in learning.

Learning opportunities offered in CCB that focus on individual development may or may not serve foundational learners, but the PILOs of CCB learning opportunities do not focus on building the skills and habits identified in the Skills for Learning category.

Can newcomers / English Language Learners participate in Skills for Learning programs?

The answer to this question depends entirely on the Primary Intended Learning Objective (PILO) of the Skills for Learning program. An English language learner would generally fall under the definition of Foundational Learner in section 5.1 of the [CALP Guidelines 2020](#).

If the PILO of the learning opportunity in Skills for Learning is language development (speaking, reading, writing, listening), the learning opportunity should be categorized in English Language Learning.

If the PILO of the learning opportunity is to support learners to build the following skills and habits needed to set and achieve the newcomer's learning goals, be

successful in further learning, and increase confidence in their ability to be a more self-directed, independent learner, the learning opportunity could be categorized in Skills for Learning.

- Recognizing oneself as a learner;
- Taking risks in learning;
- Actively engaging in the act of learning;
- Developing learning strategies;
- Building collaboration skills in learning;
- Strengthening communication skills in learning.

Why would all family literacy programs not be categorized as Skills for Learning (Formerly Foundational Life Skills)?

Categorization of learning opportunities is determined by the primary intended learning objectives (PILOs) of each opportunity. Not all learning opportunities offered through the family literacy programs mode of delivery have the same PILOs as the Skills for Learning category. For example, learning opportunities in the English Language Learning category using the family literacy programs mode of delivery may be focused on one or more of the following PILOs: reading, writing, speaking, and listening in English. The PILO should be improving English language skills (which may include one or more of the above).

It is also important to note that the PILOs of the new Skills for Learning category are skills and habits that are not exclusive to that category. Skills for Learning, will **primarily** focus on developing the following skills and learning habits:

- Recognizing oneself as a learner;
- Taking risks in learning;
- Actively engaging in the act of learning;
- Developing learning strategies;
- Building collaboration skills in learning;
- Strengthening communication skills in learning.

... while other categories of Literacy and Foundational Learning will continue building those skills and habits, but **not as the primary** intended learning objective.