

**Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
Activity on the
Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning (RNFIL)**



**Report
Province of Saskatchewan**

Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)

**SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA
BACKGROUND REPORT FOR OECD ACTIVITY
RECOGNITION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING**

December 22, 2006

Component 1. Contextual Factors

Component 1.1. Demographic Change

1.1.a) The following data represent participation rates for designated equity groups for the University of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, and the Regional Colleges.

University of Saskatchewan

Table 1:

Regular Session Self Declared Aboriginal Ancestry, fulltime, parttime, maintenance of status

| | 2001/02 | | 2002/03 | | 2003/04 | | 2004/05 | |
|--------------|------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Indian | 310 | 57.3% | 551 | 53.9% | 883 | 52.8% | 926 | 50.7% |
| Inuit | 4 | 0.7% | 8 | 0.8% | 28 | 1.7% | 30 | 1.6% |
| Métis | 227 | 42.0% | 464 | 45.4% | 760 | 45.5% | 869 | 47.6% |
| Total | 541 | | 1023 | | 1671 | | 1825 | |

Table 2:

Regular Session Self-Declared Students with Disabilities

| | 2001/02 | 2002/03 | 2003/04 | 2004/05 |
|-------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Disability | 109 | 280 | 423 | 453 |

Table 3:

Regular Session Self-Declared Students with Disabilities

| | 2001/02 | 2002/03 | 2003/04 | 2004/05 |
|------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Male-Full Time | 37 | 90 | 147 | 163 |
| Female-Full Time | 34 | 108 | 149 | 159 |
| Male-Part Time | 14 | 30 | 60 | 64 |
| Female-Part Time | 24 | 52 | 67 | 67 |

Table 4: Summary of Students by Gender and Faculty, Year: Full-Time Status Only

| | Male | Female | Total |
|------------------------|------|--------|-------|
| Agriculture | 250 | 310 | 560 |
| Arts and Science | 3073 | 4628 | 7701 |
| Commerce | 765 | 771 | 1536 |
| Dentistry | 60 | 47 | 107 |
| Education | 322 | 798 | 1120 |
| Engineering | 1160 | 232 | 1392 |
| Kinesiology | 208 | 291 | 499 |
| Law | 162 | 160 | 322 |
| Medicine | 119 | 118 | 237 |
| Nursing | 51 | 706 | 757 |
| Pharmacy and Nutrition | 101 | 332 | 433 |
| Physical Therapy | 17 | 71 | 88 |
| Veterinary Medicine | 62 | 221 | 283 |
| Unclassified | 866 | 1014 | 1880 |

Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology**Table 5:****SIAST Participation Rates for Designated Students, All Programs**

| | 2003-04 | 2004-05 |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Persons of Aboriginal ancestry | 18.6% | 18.8% |
| Persons with disabilities | 4.9% | 4.9% |
| Persons of visible minorities | 2.7% | 2.7% |
| Female Students | 42.8% | 44.9% |

Regional Colleges**Table 6: Regional College* Participation Rates for Designated Full-Time Students, All Programs**

| | 2003/04 | | 2004/05 | |
|--------------------|---------|------------|---------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Aboriginal | 1137 | 44 | 879 | 40 |
| Visible Minorities | 158 | 6 | 88 | 4 |
| Disabled | 116 | 4 | 156 | 7 |
| Total Enrolled | 2604 | | 2190 | |

*Data not included for Northlands and Lakeland College

Evidence of admission and graduation rates:

- Individuals from higher income families remain much more likely to attend university; however, the participation gap between students from higher- and lower-income families attending university narrowed through the 1990s. This in part reflects increases in the participation rates among students from the lower-income families. It also reflects declines in the rates of those from higher-income families. (Note: data on access to post-secondary institutions and its relation to family income is only currently available at the national level).
- In colleges, participation rates are much more similar across family income groupings. Further, there has been a steady growth in participation across all income groups, starting at about 15% to 20% in the early 1980s, rising steadily to about 20% to 25% in 2000. Most consistent growth was identified among low-income groups, with middle-income groups seeing slight but steady increases.
- From a national graduate survey (class of 2000), at the time of enrolment in a university program, the demographics of the survey participants broke down as follows: 60% were women; 55% were under 20 years of age; 40% had at least some post-secondary education. Compared with technical/trade school graduates, university graduates are younger and more likely to be enrolling with at least some post-secondary education.
- By 2005, females exceed males in the graduation rates of all credential types as shown in the table below.

Table 6: All Credentials: Graduations by Gender and Credential Type

| | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 |
|------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Undergraduate-Female | 60.06% | 60.02% | 59.83% | 61.25% | 59.92% |
| Undergraduate-Male | 39.94% | 39.98% | 40.17% | 38.75% | 40.08% |
| Graduate-Female | 47.69% | 50.42% | 47.23% | 54.21% | 51.95% |
| Graduate-Male | 52.31% | 49.58% | 52.77% | 45.79% | 48.05% |
| Non-Degree-Female | 56.52% | 57.88% | 54.40% | 59.71% | 61.41% |
| <i>Non-Degree-Male</i> | 43.48% | 42.12% | 45.60% | 40.29% | 38.59% |

- Seven out of ten university students graduate before age 27.

1.1.b) The important demographic changes in the province of Saskatchewan are as follows:

- The natural growth rate (births minus deaths) of the population is projected to be 2000 people per year in five years and will fall to zero by 2010. That means the overall size of the provincial population will be determined by migration to an even greater extent than what occurs now. Currently, there is a small fluctuation in the size of the population from year-to-year in net migration. The province loses population to other jurisdictions, particularly youth with higher education levels.
- Saskatchewan's population has hovered around the one million mark for the past two decades. Overall, Saskatchewan's population numbers are projected to remain relatively stable over the next twenty years. However, significant changes are projected to occur *within* the population.
- Among the ten provinces, Saskatchewan has the highest proportion of people under 20 years of age and the highest proportion over 65 years of age.
- The working population is increasingly comprised of older individuals; between 1991 and 2001, the 25 to 34 age cohort declined by 27%, and the 45 to 64 age cohort increased by 22%. The province has the smallest workforce age population in the country (56%, compared to the national average of 61%) with a large number of employees in the 45-64 age group.
- Saskatchewan also has the largest proportion of seniors (15% compared to the national average of 13%).
- The aging population has also resulted in fewer school-age children. By 2010, the population of children under the age of 15 in the province is expected to decline a further 11%.
- Saskatchewan also has a relatively large number of youth. In 2001, the percentage of Saskatchewan residents under the age of 20 was 29.2%, the highest in the country.
- In 2001, 13.5% of Saskatchewan's population was Aboriginal (the second highest proportion of Aboriginal population in the country). The provincial Aboriginal population is, on average, ten years younger than the non-Aboriginal population. In 2001, 40% of the Aboriginal population was under 15 years of age, compared to 19% of the non-Aboriginal population. With the expected growth of the Aboriginal labour force, the current proportion of Aboriginal people in today's labour force is 9% and is expected to increase to 19% by 2025, with 1 in 4 new labour market entrants (aged 15 to 29) expected to be Aboriginal.

- Saskatchewan, like other small provinces, has experienced a long-term decline in its share of Canada's total immigration, from over 1% in the early 1980s to under 1% by the late 1990s, despite an increase in total immigration in Canada over the last decade. It is recognized that a more aggressive and proactive immigration role needs to be pursued in Saskatchewan.
- 17.3% of Saskatchewan adults aged 15 and over had some form of disability that requires supports and accommodations to learn and work. The incidence of disability is higher in the Aboriginal population, with the rates of disabilities being twice as high in some age groups compared to the non-Aboriginal population.
- Saskatchewan just removed the mandatory retirement age of 65.

These demographic changes have the following effects on the participation in various sectors of education and training:

- As the cohort under 20 years of age continues to age and move through the education system over the next decade, there will be a significant negative impact on K-12 student enrolments. An enrolment decline of 29,000 students is projected over the next ten years. Both rural and urban sub-populations will share equally in these declining enrolments.
- The number of Grade 12 graduates will begin to decline in 2006-07, decreasing the traditional source of students for the post-secondary system. An increasing proportion of young people will be of Aboriginal origin or immigrants. The next decade will see an unprecedented need to increase the rates of participation in post-secondary education and training generally and especially from those who have not participated at levels comparable to the rest of the population. The largest population groups in this category are the First Nations and Métis populations.
- Currently, the 18-20% of *potential* entrants to the post-secondary system in the 15 to 29 year age group are Aboriginal. This is expected to rise to 25% by 2013 and 27% by 2016.
- It is estimated that two thirds of the new openings in the labour market over the coming years will require post-secondary education and training. Today less than 50% of the workforce has some kind of post-secondary education. The education and training system will be under pressure to provide new/renewed trained workers for the labour force. With current institutions functioning at or near capacity, new and innovative strategies will need to be implemented to ensure that there are relevant and accessible programs to supply skilled workers to support the province's economy. By some estimates, the current number of graduates needs to increase by 30% or more.
- Post secondary institutions report an increase in the number of students with disabilities requiring additional supports.

- Opportunities exist for increasing the training and education levels in the population generally and among older Saskatchewan residents, the Aboriginal population and recent immigrants.

1.1.c) While there is no formal policy in place, the province has taken a number of steps to stem the migratory flow out of the province and to attract workers from other provinces:

- An increase has been made to the graduate tax credit from \$675 to \$850 for students who graduate from a post-secondary institution in 2006. The credit will increase to \$1,000 by 2007 and serves as an incentive for students who graduate from post-secondary education to start their careers in Saskatchewan.
- The Government of Saskatchewan is holding its first Saskatchewan Youth Summit in February 2007 in Saskatoon as part of its strategy to attract and retain young people in the province by demonstrating how this province is the best place for young people to live, work and build their future.
- The province has allocated \$25 million to retain and recruit health care professionals over the next three years. The government is targeting \$15 million of the funding to retain and recruit nurses, and \$10 million to keep and attract professionals from the broader health workforce.
- An aggressive media campaign has been launched across Canada to publicize the opportunities for employment in Saskatchewan.
- The province has injected an incremental \$52.6 million into the post-secondary education and training system to enable an increase in capacity so that more people can obtain the training they need in Saskatchewan rather than move to neighbouring provinces to access training in their preferred program of study.

1.1.d) Universities have adopted policies to enable mature students access to post-secondary education, regardless of background or level of education attained. Applicants over the age of 21 may be admitted to certain programs without completion of Grade 12. Applicants 18 years or older can be admitted to the Casual Program, which permits students to register in various courses, without being registered in a defined program of studies. This adaptation to entrance requirements facilitates the continuing education of working adults who may be required to hold certification, or advanced qualifications, in occupations which didn't previously require those levels of training (for example, childcare workers). These adults are being admitted on the strength of their past work experience.

Component 1.2. Internationalisation

- 1.2.a) Saskatchewan is facing the challenge of recognizing and utilizing immigrants' knowledge and skills to maximize their participation in the economy. Numerous inter-related barriers to employment and career opportunities have been identified, including the lack of flexible procedures in recognizing knowledge, skills and abilities acquired outside the province. The *Recognizing Prior Learning (RPL) in Saskatchewan: Provincial Policy Framework* (the "RPL Framework") was adopted by the Government of Saskatchewan in June 2004. A key action identified in the Framework is to "Use RPL as a means to support labour mobility from other provinces and countries." The province is engaged in a number of initiatives to identify barriers, profile best practices, increase stakeholder awareness, build capacity in stakeholder organizations, and coordinate approaches for competency recognition. A major barrier to making full use of RPL in the immigrant population is lack of English language proficiency. Language training in English as a Second Language (ESL) is available through education and training institutions as well as community-based organizations. These programs are not always closely coordinated with RPL practices or occupation-specific upgrading for immigrants.
- 1.2.b) In 1995, the government of Saskatchewan established a contractual partnership with International Qualifications Assessment Services (IQAS), based in Alberta. For a fee, IQAS will assist individuals to obtain recognition of equivalencies for the education they received outside of Canada. IQAS evaluations are *advisory only* and currently do not take into account informal and non-formal learning.

Component 1.3. New ICT

- 1.3.a) ICT has facilitated the administration and record-keeping of RPL. For example, the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIASST) has developed a database of courses eligible for Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR), including information on requirements, process and fees. The database provides prospective candidates access to information to help them determine whether or not to proceed with PLAR, and what steps are required in order to do so.

Student records are electronically coded by SIASST to identify on internal records the courses that have been credited through PLAR, enabling the tracking of successful attempts. Confidentiality is maintained on external records (transcripts), with no distinctive codes accorded to credits obtained through alternate assessment methods. Thus no stigma is attached to students who have obtained credits or certification through the PLAR process.

The ability to track and maintain efficient records of credits granted through PLAR may aid administrative processes supporting the granting of partial credits and recognition of course modularization. This type of work, however, is still under development.

The Saskatchewan Council for Admissions and Transfer (SaskCAT) has developed a centralized online database of Saskatchewan course and program credits that are transferable among provincial post-secondary institutions. Work is underway to include data on recognized

equivalencies for admission purposes. However, the database does not provide course equivalencies for informal or non-formal learning recognition. (See: www.saskcat.ca)

- 1.3.b) Saskatchewan's technical institutes and regional colleges offer online industry-based/industry certified training on demand (CISCO, Microsoft, Education-to-Go). This training is, in part, a response to labour market demand. There is no evidence of the "currency" of this training vis-à-vis comparable academic qualifications.
- 1.3.c) Institutions are investigating the use of e-portfolios through special projects in partnership with federally and provincially funded initiatives. For example, the regional colleges have used e-portfolio software in the Older Worker pilot projects and in an Office Education program. Traditional portfolios (not e-portfolios) have proven to be successful in the Older Worker case studies and in Aboriginal training programs.

Saskatchewan universities provide students in teacher education with "hands-on" experience with portfolios, since portfolio development is taught within the K-12 school system. Enterprising students may individually adapt their portfolios to an electronic application; however, no institutional or provincial policies regarding e-portfolio use have arisen from these activities. One of the challenges is that the development of e-portfolios may intimidate older adults who do not have strong computer literacy skills. Most students require guidance in the process and prefer the one-on-one contact that more traditional portfolio development workshops provide. To date, Saskatchewan has had limited acceptance of e-portfolios by users and employers in Saskatchewan. In rural Saskatchewan, the use of e-portfolios is not as well known and has not been embraced as essential to finding employment.

Component 1.4. Economic developments and skills shortage/mismatch

- 1.4.a) There is no legal framework for the recognition of informal and non-formal learning in Saskatchewan. The RPL Framework, approved in June 2004, identifies specific actions to be collaboratively undertaken by government and various stakeholders. These actions are intended to promote quality RPL practices within business and labour, education and training institutions, and all other regional stakeholders. Consideration is given to northern and outlying regions, which are characterised by a predominantly Aboriginal population, which have experienced a relatively higher unemployment rate. A concerted effort is being made to plan initiatives to address the particular issues faced by these regions.

- 1.4.b) Strong economies, compounded by an aging population and labour force, are causing tighter labour markets in Canada, including Saskatchewan. There is increasing competition for workers fuelled by rising wages. Instead of a gradual tightening of the labour market over the next five to ten years, Saskatchewan is already facing acute labour shortages.

Saskatchewan's labour market situation is exacerbated by its proximity to Alberta, which has the fastest growing economy in Canada and is aggressively dealing with its own labour market shortages. Although Saskatchewan has an advantage in the large number of young Aboriginal people in the province that can help offset the declining labour force, the challenge is that their education and employment outcomes need to improve significantly. Although Saskatchewan is taking a much more proactive approach to increase and retain immigrants, even meeting existing targets is not expected to offset the decline in the labour force.

While there are no direct statistical measures of a labour or skills shortage, there is some anecdotal and other indirect evidence:

- The unemployment rate in the first nine months of 2006 has averaged 5.0%, an all time low.
- The number of people receiving employment insurance benefits has averaged 9,400 for the first seven months of 2006; an all time low.
- A 2005 survey of Saskatchewan manufacturers found that 26% reported that a shortage of skilled labour was limiting production and 12% reported a shortage of unskilled labour. The greatest reason for hiring difficulties is the lack of candidates with the required education/experience/skill set in the immediate geographic vicinity.
- Employment earnings have grown by 4.4% in the first seven months of 2006, the highest rate increase since 1991.
- Employment is increasing among those 55 years of age and older and among those with less than Grade 12.
- In a national study, 87% of university graduates from the class of 2000 were employed two years after graduation. Eight out of ten graduates with a job reported that their work was closely or somewhat related to their field of study. Two thirds of those who graduated with a degree were in either a management or professional position (i.e. a position that normally requires a degree). However, 16% were in low skill or intermediate positions that typically require only a high school education. For those who graduated with a technical education and have found a job, four out of ten report that their job was closely or somewhat related to their field of study.

Several sectors /industries in particular are experiencing pressure in Saskatchewan:

- **Health** related occupations that are persistently in high demand across various skill levels include: managers in health, specialist physicians, general practitioners and family physicians, audiologists and speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, head nurses and supervisors, registered nurses, medical laboratory technicians, respiratory therapists, medical sonographers and licensed practical nurses.
- **Skilled Trades and Labourers** – trades where shortages exist include: machinists and machining and tooling inspectors, electricians, plumbers, steamfitters, pipefitters and sprinkler system installers, welders and related machine operators, carpenters, roofers and shinglers, millrights (industrial), refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics, heavy-duty equipment mechanic, auto service technicians and motor vehicle repairers.
- **Truck drivers** - specifically long-haul, suitably licensed drivers are in high demand nationally, regionally and provincially.
- **Oil and Gas** industry related occupations in demand in Saskatchewan are well drillers, servicers, testers, labourers and supervisors.
- **Agriculture** occupations under pressure include general farm workers and nursery and greenhouse workers.

Saskatchewan is developing a provincial labour market strategy that focuses on development, attraction and retention of skilled labour to help address the province's tightening labour market and shortage of qualified workers. The provincial immigration strategy, with a \$6.3 million budget for 2006-07, aims to attract more immigrants to Saskatchewan and help them settle in Saskatchewan communities and labour force. Through the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP), the province will seek to increase the number of immigrants to the province from 454 nominees (approximately 1,400 immigrants including accompanying family members) to 1,500-2,000 nominees annually (4,500 – 6,000 immigrants) by 2008-09. There will be increased expenditures on support programs to address the employment, language, literacy, essential skills and other settlement needs.

Government has also taken numerous steps to help employers and industry respond to skill shortages including:

- \$15.5 million in additional funds to increase training employment preparation opportunities (including adult basic education and apprenticeship) by 2,759;

- First time funding of \$332,000 was provided to the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) to deliver adult basic education programs. This represents a major policy shift in Saskatchewan to provide funding to an institution that falls under the jurisdiction of the federal government.
- Incremental provincial funding of \$17.8 million was provided to Saskatchewan universities in 2006-07 to enable tuition fees to be maintained at 2004-05 levels for undergraduate and many graduate programs. Tuition fees will continue to be frozen until 2007-08.
- Provincial Training Allowance (income support to low-income students) was increased by \$3.8 million, bringing the total to \$ 27.3 million. This increase will provide each student with an additional \$60 per month to assist in covering increased costs resulting from inflation.
- With the expansion of the province's Youth Apprenticeship Program, 5,000 high school students will have the opportunity to learn more about careers in the trades.

1.4.c) Generally, Saskatchewan's population is becoming more educated over time, reflecting a national trend. Post-secondary education levels have increased for all age groups over the past decade. Despite this, Saskatchewan remains below the national average in most age groups, with the exception of the 55 to 64 age cohort, which has a slightly higher percentage of people with post-secondary education than the national average. Over the past decade, all growth in the population has been from people with a high school completion or higher level of education. Notably the number of people with less than Grade 12 completion has dropped significantly over the last decade.

Certain groups within the population continue to face economic and social disparities:

Aboriginal People

Despite important gains in recent decades, Aboriginal people earn less, have lower rates of employment and labour force participation, and higher rates of unemployment compared to the general population.

In 2001, 53% of the Aboriginal population over 15 years of age had less than a Grade 12 education, 21% had Grade 12 and/or some PSE, 20% had a post-secondary certificate or diploma, and 6% had a university degree. By comparison, education levels in the non-Aboriginal population in these categories were 38%, 22%, 26% and 15%. Overall, educational attainment for the non-Aboriginal population remains 12% higher than the Aboriginal population. About the same proportion of Aboriginal students in Canada who complete high school and get a graduation certificate go on to complete some form of post-secondary education, compared to the general population. Therefore, the problem of access to education is less critical than the rate that Aboriginal students are dropping out and not completing high school.

In general, post-secondary education and training programs have made significant progress in attracting greater participation of Aboriginal students. Participation rates at the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) rose from 7.7% in 1990 to 18.4% in 2002-03, although the effect of higher enrolments in Adult Basic Education (ABE) is not factored into these figures. Marked increases have occurred in participation rates relative to the baseline in ABE, apprenticeship and work-based training programs.

There are significant differences in labour market outcomes of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Saskatchewan. In 2001, the employment rate for non-Aboriginal people was 66% and 48.9% for Aboriginal people - a 17.1% gap. In 2004/05, the employment rate gap narrowed by two percentage points to 15%. Aboriginal people with some post-secondary education have experienced improved labour market outcomes since 2001. The Aboriginal population off-reserve with some post-secondary education or less had higher employment (53.7% compared to 46.6%) and participation (64.8% compared to 60.4%) rates and lower unemployment rate (15.0% compared to 22.7%) in 2004-05. Similarly, those with completed post-secondary education also had higher unemployment (80.0% vs 73.4%), participation (87.7% vs 83.4%) and lower unemployment (8.8% vs 12.3%) over this time span. Increased levels of education positively affect labour market outcomes, as the Aboriginal population with completed post-secondary education more closely resembled the labour market outcomes of the non-Aboriginal population. The gap in the employment, unemployment and participation rates, for those with completed post-secondary education, all narrowed by more than 3% from 2001 to 2004-05.

Youth

As measured by the pre-tax low income cut-off, low incomes are experienced most frequently in Canada and Saskatchewan by children under age 18 in single-mother families. The prevalence of low income has declined between 1999 and 2001 for children living in single-mother families, but not for those living in two-parent families in Saskatchewan.

Youth aged 15-24 have the lowest wages with a full-time average of \$11.16, which is 38% less than the population aged 15 years and older. In 2005, 75.4% of youth aged 15 to 24 were employed, 51.3% full-time and 34.2% part-time. Overall, more youth are finding employment in Saskatchewan, accounting for more than 80% of the total employment increase in the province in August 2006. In contrast, the employment and participation rates for Aboriginal youth declined more than 2 percentage points from 2001 to 2004-04 (compared to a 2 percentage point increase for non-Aboriginal youth) and their unemployment rate increased a percentage point during the same time frame.

In 2004, youth aged 15 to 24 represented 36% of all part-time employees, which is twice as high as their 18% share of the employed labour force. This is due to several factors, including attendance at educational institutions, lack of work experience and personal preference.

Saskatchewan had 27,000 people unemployed in 2004, with 36% of the unemployed between the ages of 15 and 24. Within the province, youth have had the highest unemployment rate among the various age groups. While this rate has decreased for youth from 14% to 12% between 1984 and 2004, it has followed the same rate of decrease relative to the rest of the population.

Women

Overall the average hourly rate for women was 16% lower than the rate for men in the province. Over the past seven years, women's average wage has increased faster than men's, which is starting to close the wage disparity. Women accounted for nearly 7 of every 10 part-time workers in the province. In the 35 to 44 age group, women accounted for 86% of all part-time workers.

There have been considerable gains over the past few years in the participation of women in training. Post-secondary institutions are doing a better job at supporting women. Two of the factors that contribute to increased participation by women are flexibility and decentralization in training.

Immigrants

There is growing evidence that, despite their knowledge, skills and motivation, immigrants struggle in Canada after their arrival. Census 2001 data indicates that there is a persistent gap in the labour market outcomes of recent immigrants (those arriving in Canada in the last decade) and people born in Canada.

The unemployment rate of recent immigrants (12.1%) was nearly twice that of Canadian-born (6.4%). In 2001, only 65.8% of recent immigrants aged 24 to 44 held jobs, compared with 81.8% of the Canadian-born population in the same age group, a gap of 16 percentage points, even though recent immigrants are, on average, more likely to have completed post-secondary education programs than their Canadian-born counterparts.

In 2003, of 200 of Saskatchewan's in-province immigrants and refugees surveyed (in the report *Meeting Needs and Making Connections*), 42% reported not being able to secure employment in this province. Over half of those interviewed in the study (58% of 272) reported having problems accessing the kind of job they wanted and attributed these problems to three main factors: limited language skills; limited access to further education and training opportunities; and, lack of recognition of international credentials.

Like other small provinces, Saskatchewan experiences high rates of secondary migration of immigrants and refugees. Approximately 51.5% of immigrants arriving in Saskatchewan between 1980 and 1999 had left the province by 2000. Looking for employment and better career opportunities was cited as the main reason for leaving the province in the 2003 survey.

Although 56% of the in-province immigrants and refugees reported being employed at the time of the 2003 survey, most of them reported employment in low skill level occupations that did not generally match their prior education and occupational experience. The results of more recent surveys on immigrant employment needs suggest that underemployment continues to be common among immigrants and refugees to Saskatchewan.

- 1.4.d) While Saskatchewan does not have specific data to cite in this area, there have been initiatives to enhance literacy to improve prospects for economic development. In 2005, the Saskatchewan Literacy Commission was founded with a mandate to raise awareness of high level literacy development for all citizens. The SaskSmart Innovations Fund, another government initiative, provides funding for family and workplace literacy and learning initiatives.
- 1.4.e) The Government of Canada, based on the prediction of a declining labour force supply, provides funding to encourage older workers to enter or remain in the labour force. Because of its older workforce, Saskatchewan is expected to experience a tight labour market sooner than the rest of the country. In 2001, Saskatchewan entered into a partnership with Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) to deliver the Saskatchewan Older Workers in Agriculture Pilot Project. Ninety-seven (97) people participated in this project through seven regional colleges; the project was completed in March 2004. The key components to the program were a career action plan and creation of a portfolio that documented skills and abilities developed through informal and non-formal learning. Through this process, participants discovered they had many marketable skills. At least two participants had their portfolios reviewed for educational credit toward a training program. The overall objective was to secure long-term sustainable employment for all participants. However, the major obstacle seemed to be the time needed to develop positive self-esteem and confidence in the work-seeking process. The study identified a large client base in rural areas who could benefit from a more structured interventional program. Individual counselling was critical to the success of the project, as was financial support.
- 1.4.f) No data available.
- 1.4.g) The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology is the only Saskatchewan post-secondary institution that has fully implemented PLAR. However, potential students wishing to enroll in specific programs are not automatically assessed but rather, are assessed at the request of the student. There are no occupations where the recognition of non-formal and informal learning is always counted as part of entrance.

Component 1.5. Social Developments

- 1.5.a) Saskatchewan has adopted the essential skills as identified by Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) and the employability skills by the Conference Board of Canada. These comprise skills, attitudes, and competencies required of workers to successfully function in today's workplace. In addition to recognizing the workplace literacy guidelines developed by national organizations, Saskatchewan has developed a set of literacy benchmarks and curricula to address adult literacy needs.
- 1.5.b) No evidence available.
- 1.5.c) No evidence available.

Component 1.6. Others

- 1.6.a) The economy is one of the key drivers of change regarding stakeholder behaviour. In times of worker shortages, employers may turn to alternative recruiting strategies, including the consideration of experiential learning in the absence of formal credentials. When the economy is experiencing a low unemployment rate, employers are more likely to demand that applicants obtain formal credentials.

Trends and policies adopted by neighbouring provinces/jurisdictions—Alberta, British Columbia and Manitoba—have a significant impact in Saskatchewan.

A key consideration in institutional adoption of policies to support the recognition of informal and non-formal learning is its validation by educational leadership. Champions at the senior levels of institutional administration significantly improve the possibilities of implementation and success. Competition for students is expected to increase in the future. Student enrolment is expected to drop significantly over the next few years, necessitating enhanced recruitment methods. Student shortages may bring about the recognition of informal and non-formal learning to boost student enrolments.

In addition, Saskatchewan's growing Aboriginal population may influence institutional administrative structures to recognize work-related prior learning. Historically, this population has experienced low high school completion rates. The provincial government recently awarded \$52 million to regional colleges, SIAST, and Aboriginal training institutions to allow additional opportunities for upgrading and training, and to support policies and practices to recognize prior learning.

Learning for leisure and pleasure is a strong activity of Saskatchewan citizens. In comparison to other Canadian provinces and territories, Saskatchewan residents rank among the highest in participation in volunteerism, community leisure activity, hobbies, and the use of public libraries for literacy development and leisure reading. This factor may have a significant impact on future recognition of informal and non-formal learning.

- 1.6.b) In the mid 1990s, the Saskatchewan Labour Force Development Board (SLFDB) championed the advancement of RPL by building on the commitment of its reference group, the Forum for Racialized Canadians, to create fair and equitable learning and foreign credential recognition processes. This led to the SLFDB Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Services Project (October 2000–March 2002), which received funds from Human Resources Development Canada and the provincial government. The project led to the development of the RPL Framework, approved in the Legislative Assembly on June 15, 2004.

Component 2. Description of Institutional Arrangements

Component 2.1. Political and legal framework

- 2.1.a) The RPL Framework set out strategic directions to support the recognition of lifelong learning, and has contributed to provincial educational and labour market planning processes. Following the adoption of the RPL Framework, an RPL Coordinating Group (RCG) was struck and tasked with implementing the Framework's comprehensive action plan. The RCG is comprised of thirty-nine members representing a wide variety of provincial stakeholder groups. The RCG provides leadership to support implementation of high-quality, accessible, and relevant RPL services.

Four working groups have been formed to focus on priority areas identified by the RCG:

1. Environmental Scan: Developing and conducting a survey of existing RPL programs and services, and professional development/support needs; analyzing data; and creating a final report that will inform planning for provincial RPL programs and services.
2. RPL Expertise: Identifying and developing sources of expertise, professional development, and research of RPL practitioner training models. The end product is anticipated to be the establishment of a network of RPL practitioners and experts and a provincial conference.
3. RPL Centre: Researching the viability of establishing an RPL Centre in Saskatchewan. The research will lead to a concept paper outlining the purpose, structure and functions of a provincial RPL Centre, outlining a number of options for consideration by the RCG.
4. RPL Communications: Development of communications strategy, including the identification of services and resource materials required to build awareness and provide support for RPL in Saskatchewan.

2.1.b) No, Saskatchewan does not have a legal regulatory framework for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan operate as autonomous organizations with individual governance and discretion in terms of policies and financial decisions. Similarly, regulatory bodies determine appropriate regulations for their individual professions, occupations, and trades, which they coordinate with educational institutions and national bodies for conformance. They are responsible for their own recognition and validation processes for recognizing prior learning. The provincial government participates at arm's-length.

2.1.c) N/A

2.1.d) N/A

2.1.e) N/A

2.1.f) N/A

2.1.g) N/A

2.1.h) N/A

Component 2.2. Governance and the role of government

2.2.a) Recognition of Non-Formal and Informal Learning: The Saskatchewan government is responsible for the advancement and sustainability of Recognizing Prior Learning within the province.

| WHO? | WHAT? |
|--|--|
| Government of Saskatchewan | Education and Training Acts; RPL Provincial Policy Framework; Funding of provincial RPL initiatives, and accountability practices. |
| Department of Advanced Education and Employment: | Develop policies and initiatives to support and advance lifelong learning, respond to labour-market needs, and implement RPL; Provides funding and human resources to support and implement RPL; Coordinates and implements initiatives to enhance RPL activity: |
| 1. University Services and Adult Learning Development Branch | 1. Two full-time RPL analysts support and liaise with stakeholders; implement the RPL Provincial Policy Framework; coordinate funding initiatives; research; and provide advice. |
| 2. Institutions Branch | 2. Fund, support and monitor institutional policies, actions, and reports. |
| 3. Programs Branch | 3. Fund, monitor, and support sector |

| | |
|--|--|
| 4. Immigration Branch | partnership programs and pilot projects that implement, enhance, or promote RPL with stakeholders. |
| 5. Community and Employment Services Branch | 4. Fund, research, and support the recognition of foreign credentials and the integration of immigrants into work, education, training, and community. 5. Provide services and support in work placement. |
| Education and Training (Post-secondary Institutions: Universities, Technical Institutes, Regional Colleges, Bible Colleges and Private Vocational Schools) | Develop RPL policies and procedures, pilot projects and research activities. Implement (Advising and Assessment) informal and non-formal learning to identified standards for credit. |
| Community Based Organizations | Assist in work placement, educational opportunities, English language proficiency, and community settlement. |
| RPL Coordinating Group (with representative membership from a wide variety of stakeholders) | Coordinate the implementation of the RPL Framework, including monitoring and accountability. |
| Professional Regulatory Bodies/Associations | Develop and protect recognized standards, quality of education and work opportunities. |

2.2.b) Recognition of Formal Learning: Each institution is responsible for defining and monitoring its own processes for delivering and assessing formal learning.

| WHO? | WHAT? |
|---|--|
| Government of Saskatchewan | Education and Training Acts; Operational and Capital funding ; and Accountability |
| Department of Advanced Education and Employment: 1. University Services and Adult Learning Development Branch (Universities) 2. Institutions Branch (Technical Institutes, Regional Colleges, and Private Vocational Schools) | 1. Develop policies and initiatives to support and advance lifelong learning, respond to labour-market needs, and implement RPL; two full-time staff support and liaise with stakeholders; provides funding. 2. Seven full-time consultants fund, support and monitor institutional policies, actions, and reports. |
| Professional Regulatory Bodies/Associations | Uphold recognized and professional standards, quality of education and work opportunities. |

2.2.c) Governance has been an industry-led model, where professional bodies (e.g., College of Physicians and Surgeons, Saskatchewan Registered Nurse Association, etc) and public

educational institutions take responsibility for assessing non-formal and informal learning (Government facilitates the process where possible; for example, through purchasing access to IQAS). However, with the introduction of the RPL Framework, government has taken a more active role in facilitation and advocacy (although still not in assessment of recognition). This marks a slight shift toward a shared responsibility model, with a need for coordination, monitoring and accountability of activities.

The provincial educational institutions operate autonomously of government. Although the provincial government provides funding, the institutions determine their programs, management, and administrative policies. Government does not assess learning, whether formal, informal, or non-formal. That responsibility rests with credentialing bodies, which include the credit granting institutions and professional/regulatory bodies.

2.2.d) N/A

Component 2.3 Resources

2.3.a) The provincial government provides funding for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning. The “policy thinking” behind this funding is to support the implementation of the objectives outlined in the provincial RPL Framework. In 2004-05, there were no funds provided to support RPL, other than salaries for two staff within the Department of Advanced Education and Employment.

2.3.b) Prior to 2006-07, no funding had been provided to external stakeholders to support non-formal and informal learning. In each of 2005-06, 2004-05 and 2003-04, provincial funding had been provided for two staff working in the area of RPL within the Department of Advanced Education and Employment (formerly Saskatchewan Learning).

In its 2006-07 budget, the provincial government provided \$500,000 to support external stakeholders in implementing initiatives related to RPL. The 2006-07 budget was allocated among provincial postsecondary education and training institutions, including: SIAST, to expand the number of programs providing PLAR for credit, and to develop curriculum for a credentialed program to train RPL practitioners; Regional Colleges, to expand the delivery of RPL advising and referral; Dumont Technical Institute, to expand the capacity of the institution to implement RPL processes; and the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, to augment RPL processes.

2.3.c) Costs vary among educational institutions. No data are available on a breakdown of costs by levels assessed or by types of subjects assessed.

SIAST has established fees for PLAR, based on the services rendered, and these fees are generally lower than tuition.

The University of Saskatchewan charges a \$50.00 fee for course challenge, regardless of the number of courses requested for challenge. This fee reverts to the faculty member or department mentoring the student. For each successful course challenge, a fee equivalent to fifty percent of

the course tuition is charged. At this time, few faculties recognize experiential learning. The University of Regina currently charges no fee for PLAR services.

- 2.3.d) No assessment centres exist to date; rather, each educational institution provides its own assessment services by faculty members. Educational institutions are located throughout Saskatchewan, in cities and larger towns, such as Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, North Battleford, Swift Current, Yorkton, and Moose Jaw. Few training opportunities exist; however, development is currently underway for an RPL Practitioner program, which will provide courses and workshops in assessment and advising.

Component 2.4 Others

- 2.4.a) The University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina both indicated that it would be advisable to link recognition processes to rewards for faculty, and in particular, tenure and promotion. These incentives would encourage faculty to provide what is seen as additional, time-consuming, and often thankless work that is currently not rewarded. The traditional reward system at the universities ties promotion to publishing research and the presenting of scholarly papers at conferences. If new tenure criteria included community work, including recognition of student's prior learning, more faculty might be interested in assisting students through the process.

Assessment locations are determined by institution location. It has been suggested that it may be useful to establish a provincial RPL centre, providing relevant research, materials, and tools, qualified advisors and assessor, and mobile or satellite services to assist providers and receivers of RPL. Research is currently underway to determine the function, purpose, feasibility, and sustainability of such a centre in Saskatchewan.

Component 3 Description of technical arrangements

Component 3.1. Qualifications, qualification systems, qualifications framework

- 3.1.a) In Saskatchewan, Recognizing Prior Learning (RPL) is the most commonly understood term. It includes assessment of formal, non-formal, and informal learning. RPL comprises Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR); Credit Transfer (CT), and Qualifications Recognition (QR). PLAR is the term used to refer to assessment of both non-formal learning (defined as intentional, gained through participation in non-credit courses; workplace-based training, or workshops) and informal learning (defined as incidental, gained through life experience, workplace-based tasks, volunteer activities, self study, hobbies, and family responsibilities).
- 3.1.b) There is no qualifications framework. Regulatory bodies and educational institutions maintain their own standards for each of the academic, occupational, and professional areas within their jurisdiction.
- 3.1.c) N/A
- 3.1.d) N/A
- 3.1.e) N/A
- 3.1.f) There may be a perception within the two provincial universities that acceptance of non-formal and informal learning may lead to quality assurance issues, putting into question the quality of their graduates and the reputation of their institution. Concerns may exist that, if standards were to be “relaxed”, accrediting bodies may not recognize their degree programs. Faculty/assessors may feel that it is difficult to uphold quality standards through the PLAR process, and that, while practical experience may be gained through informal and non-formal learning, appropriate theoretical grounding cannot.

Anecdotally, instances have been reported of students being accepted into a graduate program on the basis of an impressive portfolio, but struggling during the course of study and ultimately withdrawing because of the difficulty in meeting the academic rigor of writing papers and doing research. In addition, other graduate students reported resentment at the special privileges accorded to others that were not available to them. Students are also leery of the transcribing of PLAR, as this may negatively impact their chances of moving on to further education and training or of being hired.

One of the issues for institutions is that the entire process of recognition of non-formal and informal learning is labour- and time intensive. This acts as a disincentive to the recognition process.

Overcoming resistance from the higher education sector is best done through awareness building, open dialogue, professional development opportunities for faculty, and the identification of

champions to provide leadership and mentoring support. Acceptance and promotion of PLAR by senior administration would send a clear and positive message.

Awareness building and communication strategies are also necessary to clearly inform potential candidates in advance of the process about the expectations necessary to maintain quality standards. There is a common misperception that PLAR will enable participants to easily obtain blocks of university credit for little work. The reality is that challenging prior learning for credit is often a lengthy, time consuming process, with minimal credit granted at the end of the day.

Component 3.2. Credit accumulation and transfer

- 3.2.a) There are no formal credit arrangements for non-formal and informal learning. The University of Saskatchewan's *Challenge for Credit Policy* (2002) allows students to articulate and verify what they know and can do against the standards required by specific university-level courses and programs. However, data are not currently tracked on the number of actual users. The University of Regina is currently developing a policy on PLAR. Anecdotal estimates report that over 30 students in Nursing have succeeded in having prior nursing experience credited. Other program areas where PLAR has been used include Art, Communications, Film, Police Studies, and English. Students in applied subjects are also more likely to apply for PLAR, since they are the most likely to have tangible evidence handy, such as an art portfolio or creative writing collection.

The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology has a PLAR policy that was officially passed in 2004. SIAST does not track specific occupations but does provide percentages for 2005-06 for various divisions that have this learning acknowledged. They include Business and Entrepreneurial Studies (8%); Community Service (53%); Industrial (1%); Nursing (6%); Science and Health (31%); and Technology (1%). In 2006, 91 of approximately 200 programs provided PLAR on request.

- 3.2.b) Registrars are responsible for credit arrangements and transfers of non-formal and informal learning, just as they are for formal learning. Faculty members are responsible for course content and requirements, including assessment and evaluation.

- 3.2.c) SIAST calculates 20 contact hours as equivalent to 1 credit hour. The universities generally allocate 3 credit hours per course, with 1 credit hour the equivalent of 15 contact hours.

3.2.d) Incentives

PLAR candidates have much to gain from the successful challenge of a course, including less time to completion and a faster path to employment; less repetition of training; fewer costs related to incidental issues such as books, transportation, and babysitting; and increased self-esteem and confidence.

Disincentives

A disincentive for providers is the time and effort required to implement the process, both in preparation by the applicant and in the mentoring and assessment by the provider. Candidates

may need weeks or even months to assemble portfolios and collect evidence. The administrative process requires adoption of policies, procedures and new reporting and tracking methods.

Institutions cite inadequate funding to train and compensate advisors and assessors and to create tools and resources, administrative procedures, and gap training. For faculty, who already report being overloaded, the additional tasks come with no recognition to them or increase in pay.

3.2.e) N/A

3.2.f) N/A

Component 3.3 Assessment methods and procedures

3.3.a) Each institution in Saskatchewan is responsible for and develops its own assessment arrangements. Assessors, who are normally faculty members, are solely responsible for methods and procedures of assessing candidates in their subject area of expertise, as they are for students in the formal setting. The time required to complete the assessment varies from case to case.

The University of Regina recently drafted a policy to assist students and administration to move through the various stages of the process more efficiently. The University of Saskatchewan's *Challenge for Credit Policy* also outlines the required steps for the assessment process.

SIAST has developed a 10 step model for PLAR, as follows:

1. Student consults with PLAR designated contact at SIAST
2. Student completes application for PLAR
3. PLAR audit meeting is scheduled
4. Action plan is developed
5. Student pays fee for course assessment
6. Student prepares for assessment
7. SIAST facilitates the challenge process
8. SIAST evaluates
9. Results are submitted to registration services
10. SIAST notifies student of result

3.3.b) A broad range of assessment methods are used among Saskatchewan institutions, including interviews, portfolio development, written or oral exams, demonstrations, course challenges, research papers, standardized tests, group presentations, oral presentations, and letters of attestation. Generally, these assessments are summative.

In the area of apprenticeship and trades, assessment tends to be competency based. Supporting documentation is usually required to substantiate work-related experience. Alternative processes include interviews and written and practical examination.

The most often cited barrier is the time, energy, and cost associated with portfolio-based assessment. General portfolio development is a process that provides many personal and

professional benefits in itself. Portfolio workshops provide assistance in generic portfolio processes and self-reflection. When the portfolio is used as evidence for assessment purposes, it must be developed with the end in mind. For example, a portfolio to be presented for academic credit is prepared and presented differently than one for employment purposes.

3.3.c) Academic standards are established by educational institutions and, if applicable, accrediting organizations. Professional standards are generally established by professional and regulatory bodies. Occupational standards may be established by employers, or by professional and training organizations. Some professional and occupational standards may be legislated. Regulatory organizations, such as Trades and Apprenticeship, derive their authority through legislation, which is usually enacted at the provincial level.

3.3.d) N/A

3.3.e) Normally the educational and training institutions and the regulatory bodies retain the responsibility of quality assurance.

Component 3.4. Others

3.4.a) N/A

Component 4. Stakeholder behaviour

Component 4.1 Characteristics of stakeholders

4.1.a)

Non-formal learning (Characteristics of Stakeholder Grid)

(NOTE: No differentiation between Non-Formal or Informal Learning for Assessment Purposes)

| Provider of non-formal learning | Recogniser of such non-formal learning | Types of recognition received | Regulator | Main Users |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-secondary institutions • Continuing education departments • Community Based Organizations • Libraries • In-house company training • Professional and occupational associations/ professional development • Sector partnerships • Career and Employment Centres | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprenticeship and Trades Commission • Post-secondary Institutions • Regulatory bodies • Professional and Occupational Organizations • Employers • Private and Public Companies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credits toward Certificates/ Diplomas/ Degrees • Licences • Professional/ occupational qualifications • Non-credit certificates • Employment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprenticeship and Trades Commission • Institutions • Regulatory bodies • Professional and Occupational Organizations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students • Adult Learners • Workers • Job-seekers |

Component 4.2 Access

4.2.a) N/A

4.2.b) Data not available.

4.2.c) There is no “one-stop” information service centre or help-desk for RPL in Saskatchewan. The Department of Advanced Education and Employment maintains an RPL Website that provides information such as reports, resources, and a referral guide, as well as online links to education and training providers, professional organizations, and regulatory bodies. An online query line is available for users to ask questions related to RPL. Usage of the website (e.g. number of clicks per month, “click ratio”) is not tracked. See: <http://www.aee.gov.sk.ca/rpl>.

Component 4.3 Participation

4.3.a) Information about participation rates is limited. Institutional records do not indicate information such as marital status, gender, or ethnicity of students accessing RPL processes. SIAST does maintain records on success rates, however. In 2005-06, 932 course challenges were documented, of which 87% were successful, 2% were unsuccessful, and 11% are still pending. In 1999, the first year of PLAR record-keeping, there were 559 course challenges. At SIAST, students in Early Childhood Education have been highly successful in using PLAR to successfully recognize their learning, allowing them to identify gaps in their learning and take training, and be provincially certified.

Anecdotal reports indicate that most candidates are older adults (mature students) of both genders but primarily females, middle class; not First Nations; already gainfully employed, and with prior formal education. They tend to be people who have worked for a number of years, had their education interrupted earlier in life, and have reached a ceiling in their current jobs.

4.3.b) No data available.

4.3.c) No evidence available. Disadvantaged groups in Saskatchewan would include rural and northern residents, First Nations and Métis peoples, immigrants, and refugees.

Component 4.4. Incentives and disincentives

4.4.a) Regional colleges and technical institutions report that PLAR mainly serves to direct people into new career pathways and jobs. For example, skills in one area, such as Continuing Care Aide, may be transferable to another, such as Home Special Care or Licensed Practical Nurse, with the appropriate top-up or gap training. There is no evidence that length of unemployment influences transitions.

4.4.b) SIAST reported 932 course challenges in 2006; nearly double the 559 course challenges attempted in 1999. A significant number of students, therefore, are reducing the length of their programs and the costs of study through recognition of their informal and non-formal learning. The occupation areas that receive most challenge credit are: Community Services (53%); Science

and Health (31%); Business and Entrepreneurial (8%); Nursing (6%); Industrial (1%); and Technology (1%).

The Saskatchewan government's Job Start/Future Skills Sector Partnerships Program has worked collaboratively with various sectors (Nursing; Hunting, Fishing and Tour Guide Sector; Water, Waste-Water Management Systems, Early Childhood Education, and the Paramedic Association) to explore ways that RPL can support training and career laddering to address human resource needs. Case study reports of these projects are available on the government website: <http://www.aee.gov.sk.ca/rpl/>.

4.4.c) N/A

4.4.d) N/A

4.4.e) N/A

4.4.f) Anecdotal reports indicate mixed reaction in the business world to students who have obtained credit through prior learning assessment. Some employers are highly impressed and recognize the rigour of the process; others are not. Academically, institutions may refuse to recognize transfer credit that has been transcribed as having been obtained through PLAR, and faculty may be biased against students with such transfer credit. SIAST has intentionally made the decision not to transcribe such transfer credit to avoid any stigma. However, the risk remains that SIAST students could be refused entry or transfer credit recognition altogether, on principle, because of this practice.

4.4.g) N/A

Component 4.5 Others

4.5.a) N/A

4.5.b) N/A

Component 5. Case Studies on benefits and barriers

Component 5.1 Economic Benefits

5.1.a) SIAST has documented numerous testimonials and case studies that illustrate the shortening of formal education processes and program costs for students. The following four case studies at SIAST illustrate some of the benefits to participants:

Early Childhood Education

In July 2001, regulatory changes to the *Saskatchewan Childcare Act* increased the level of education required to secure work in an early childhood environment. By January 1, 2005, thirty per cent of a day care's staff were required to be trained at the certificate level and by January 1, 2007, in addition to the workers mentioned, 20% of a day care's staff will be required to be

trained at the diploma level. To meet this growing demand for increased credentials, many experienced Saskatchewan workers need to upgrade their qualifications. These experienced workers have many talents, knowledge and skills, but lack post-secondary credentials. As many of these experienced workers live in rural Saskatchewan and are supporting families, they cannot move to an urban college. PLAR at SIAST was able to assess their skills and knowledge at a distance for course credit and help students meet new regulatory requirements. In 2005-06, SIAST recorded 79 Early Childhood Education PLAR challenges and in 2004-05, 76 PLAR challenges.

Continuing Care Assistant

The number of Saskatchewan people over the age of 65 is growing (147,000, 2006 Statistics). As thirty-six per cent of Saskatchewan's population live in rural areas, it is important that these people have access to qualified health professionals. Aboriginal people are also concerned with the health care needs of their people and are building health care facilities to look after their residents at home. Along with these changing demographics, a greater need for continuing care assistants is required. This need for qualified health care workers in rural Saskatchewan can often be met by people who already live and work in rural Saskatchewan and in Aboriginal communities. In 2004-05, SIAST recorded 93 PLAR challenges and 192 PLAR challenges in 2005-06 for the Continuing Care Assistant Program. Most of these applicants are not located in a major urban centre and they successfully received recognition for their knowledge and skills through distance. SIAST subject experts coordinate distance evaluation of theory and clinical skills/knowledge.

Nursing Re-entry

The Nursing Re-entry Program is an applied certificate program for individuals who:

- Have been previously registered in Canada as a psychiatric nurse, practical nurse, or registered nurse and are eligible for re-registration in Saskatchewan;
- Are currently registered in Saskatchewan and want to update and evaluate their knowledge and skills;
- Have not been registered in Canada and require or want to prepare to write registration exams (Assessment Strategies Inc).

Students enrolled in the Nurse Re-entry Programs can complete their retraining via distance education. PLAR is also offered for all courses in the program. PLAR is helping to address the nursing labour shortage. Many highly skilled nurses are reintroduced to the Saskatchewan workforce through a combination of PLAR and distance training. In 2004-05, there were 61 PLAR challenges and in 2005-06, there were 46 PLAR challenges in the Nursing Re-Entry Programs.

Building Systems Technicians – Shortage of Skilled Labour

A major crown corporation within Saskatchewan saw a need to upgrade its building maintenance technicians. Training offered by the Building Systems Technician Program (BST) at SIAST was needed to meet regulated safety requirements. The employees lived in communities throughout

Saskatchewan. Although it was critical that these employees upgrade their education, the employer could not afford to have their employees off the job for long periods of time. In the smaller Saskatchewan communities, buildings were often maintained by one or two technicians. A number of these technicians had previous training in related fields. For example, one was a journey person electrician. SIAST extension services, the program area and PLAR developed a customized program that provided this major Saskatchewan employer with the training they required. Through PLAR and the BST program credit was granted for previous training, experience and knowledge that matched course learning outcomes. Then a customized training program was developed to provide training for identified gaps in knowledge. The training schedule accommodated the employer's and employees' needs through workplace training and flexible class times. This collaborative approach resulted in 21 highly trained workers.

- 5.1.b) A case study illustrating the potential benefits for future economic gains can be found in the outfitting industry– a sector consisting of small owner-operated businesses, which are responsible for providing equipment and guides for safe and successful hunting, angling, and touring experiences throughout Saskatchewan. A prior learning assessment process was used to determine knowledge and skills already learned through non-formal experience. An assessment and top-up training system that focused on commercial vessel safety was developed to accommodate First Nations and Métis cultures. This initiative advanced the goals of the outfitting industry and helped to ensure professional standards and future economic gains.
- 5.1.c) N/A
- 5.1.d) An inter-provincial licensing agreement in Trades recognizes qualifications through the Red Seal Trades Exam. This recognition provides a standardized process to facilitate inter-provincial mobility.
- 5.1.e) On November 15, 2006 the Saskatchewan government announced a \$52.6 million investment to provide access to learning for 2,500 new students, particularly those lacking entrance requirements to post-secondary institutions. Increased training opportunities will be offered throughout the province, including northern and regional areas.

The announcement targets youth and is intended to provide training to meet the needs of the province's economic boom and strengthened labour market. Saskatchewan has also announced a policy to attract a targeted 5,000 immigrants annually by 2008. These initiatives will require an increase in RPL activities throughout the province.

- 5.1.f) No data available.

Component 5.2 Educational Benefits

- 5.2.a) No data available.
- 5.2.b) The Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations (SAHO) has developed a Career Pathing Project that provides a case study in flexible personalised learning pathways for health workers. The cornerstone of the career pathing process is the integration of holistic portfolio development

as a key component of human resource planning. Employees develop a career-focused portfolio that documents and tracks their formal and informal learning experience, serves as a learning plan for future training and development opportunities, and identifies areas of personal career interests. Individually, these portfolios validate the accomplishments and abilities of employees, while providing documentation and evidence that may be applied through PLAR processes for certification or academic credits. Collectively, the portfolios provide a “talent inventory” that can be matched with current and future needs of the health sector and serve as a valuable method of career and job matching for both employees and employers, especially in difficult-to-recruit classifications.

The intent of the Career Pathing project is to support the success and transformational growth of employees through the development of flexible, personalized career paths. In particular, the project aims to empower Aboriginal employees in entry-level positions to access future career and job options.

5.2.c) No data available.

5.2.d) No data available.

5.2.e) N/A.

Component 5.3 Social benefits

5.3.a) Saskatchewan has the youngest population in Canada, many of whom are First Nations and Métis. The Saskatchewan Speech from the Throne (2006) describes eight priorities for education and training in the province including: “Expand partnerships with First Nations and Métis peoples to enhance education and skills training.” The government is committed to partnering with First Nations and Métis institutions to bring more Aboriginal people into Saskatchewan’s labour force. It is hoped that these new initiatives will increase social cohesion and socio-cultural equity by providing pathways for formally excluded and disadvantaged groups to be included.

5.3.b) No data available. Generally, employed individuals tend to have better health profiles and less criminality.

5.3.c) N/A

5.3.d) N/A

Component 5.4 Personal benefits

5.4.a) Benefits of PLAR include:

- Savings on tuition, travel, work and family time as it reduces redundant training;
- Increased self-esteem and self-confidence by having experience formally recognized;
- Greater opportunity to gain employment; and
- Certification and portable credentials.

5.4.b) The Rural Saskatchewan Older Workers Project, while not targeting adults who had “dropped out,” did influence participants’ aspirations to resume learning and obtain qualifications. This 2003-04 pilot project was delivered in seven regional colleges across the province. The goal of the pilot was to deliver alternative training approaches to prepare older workers between the ages of 50 and 64, who were unemployed or underemployed, to make the transition to long-term sustainable employment. Two of the tasks undertaken by participants included a workshop on “Thought Patterns for a Successful Career” and a portfolio development process. A positive social benefit to come out of this pilot was “attitudinal change, positive self-esteem, and self-efficacy.” A participant remarked during feedback received for the program: “I can now set goals and look to the future with a more positive attitude.”

5.4.c) No data available.

Component 5.5 Others

5.5.a) Barriers

A major barrier is the time required to complete the PLAR process. In some cases, students have indicated that it is more difficult and time-consuming than to “simply take the class.”

A number of case studies in Saskatchewan, such as the Rural Saskatchewan Older Workers Pilot Project and the Rural and Northern Older Workers Project, highlighted in their final reports that financing to assist participants was crucial. Lack of financial support is a barrier to attend workshops and other training sessions which often necessitate transportation costs, living expenses, etc. Rural Saskatchewan communities are often spread out, with driving distances of more than one hour. The distances that participants had to travel to become a part of these projects were significant and contributed to the cost of offering workshops.

Benefits

A benefit of the process of collecting and documenting learning evidence is that it provides a record that can be used for other purposes. In one case study at the University of Saskatchewan an individual who had made a portfolio for university-entrance not only was accepted into a university program on the basis of that portfolio, but was able to re-use the same portfolio to secure a full-time, permanent job. A further benefit of the process is that the participant gains self-esteem, confidence, and validation of their own abilities and strengths.

The Rural Saskatchewan Older Workers Pilot Project and Rural and Northern Older Workers Project were particularly beneficial to participants because of the cohort experience. The group provided a support network and participants learned from each other.

Component 6 Conclusion

- 6.a) A number of goals associated with the lifelong learning agenda were outlined in the Saskatchewan Speech from the Throne (October 26, 2006), which include:
- Expand training and strengthen regional training to bring education closer to students;
 - Expand partnerships with First Nations and Métis to enhance education and skills training;
 - Receive and act on a comprehensive review of access to post-secondary education;
 - Increase opportunities for internationally educated professionals to work right here, right now; and
 - Respond further to the recommendations of the Commission on Improving Work Opportunities.

The primary goal identified by the Saskatchewan government in 2006 is expanding Saskatchewan's labour force by increasing training opportunities, and engaging youth and First Nations and Métis peoples.

- 6.b) Saskatchewan's RPL Framework provides a strategy for implementing RPL in a collaborative process with the province's stakeholders (including government, education and training providers, employers, community-based organizations, industry, regulatory bodies, professional and occupational associations, apprenticeship and trades).

The Department of Advanced Education and Employment participates in the Recognizing Prior Learning Coordinating Group (RCG) which coordinates and monitors the implementation of actions outlined in the RPL Framework. These actions are intended to integrate and help to implement recognition of all types of learning-- including formal, non-formal, and informal -- in Saskatchewan.

One of the challenges for policy makers in Saskatchewan is the province's large geographic area, with a widely dispersed population, and great diversity in stakeholders' RPL needs.

- 6.c) NA

6.d) NA

6.e) A number of factors need to be in place in Saskatchewan to realize the full-scale recognition of all types of learning, including:

- Sustainable funding mechanisms for training and compensating faculty assessors;
- Greater acceptance by universities of PLAR;
- Top-up and gap training opportunities for unsuccessful and partially successful candidates; such as modularization of courses and partial credit systems;
- Coordination of resources, tools, expertise, and assessment opportunities; and
- Development of competencies, skill sets, and occupational profiles for professions and occupations, educational programs, and regulatory standards.

Education in Canada is under provincial jurisdiction, which acts as an impediment to the development of a national RPL strategy. For ease of movement among provinces, territories, and countries, there needs to be more openness and flexibility towards the acceptance and recognition of other ways of knowing than through formal education.

Annex 1 Tables for the Analysis and the Preparation of Comparative Report

(Note: No 2004-05 Non-formal and Informal Learning expenditures for requested variables; The report below reflects 2006-07 budget.)

| | | |
|-----------|--|----------------------------|
| | Financial resources invested in recognition of non-formal and informal learning | Some data: See chart below |
| 3.1 | chart below | |
| | Total expenditure on recognition of non-formal and informal learning by source of funds..... | Some data: See chart below |
| Table W1 | below | |
| | Total public expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning..... | Negligible |
| Table W2 | Total public expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning as a % of total public ed exp..... | Negligible |
| Table W3 | Destination of public spending on recognition of non formal and informal learning..... | Some data: See chart below |
| Table W4 | below | |
| | Public expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning by level of government..... | Some data: See chart below |
| Table W5 | below | |
| | Total expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning as a % of total ed expenditure..... | Negligible |
| Table W6 | Destination of total spending on recognition of non formal and informal learning..... | Some data: See chart below |
| Table W7 | below | |
| | Expenditure per participant in any process for recognition of non-formal and informal learning..... | No data |
| 3.2 | | |
| | Expenditure per participant in the recognition process by level of education..... | No data |
| Table W8 | | |
| | Expenditure per participant in the recognition process by the aggregated level of learning..... | No data |
| Table W9 | | |
| | Expenditure per participant in the recognition process by domain of recognition..... | No data |
| Table W10 | | |
| | Expenditure per participant in the recognition process by labour force status..... | No data |
| Table W11 | | |
| | Characteristics of participants in the recognition process of non formal and informal learning | |
| 3.3 | | |
| | Population and groups size | No data |
| Table W12 | | |
| | Distribution of participants in the recognition process by age..... | No data |
| Table W13 | | |
| | Distribution of participants in the recognition process by type of subject..... | Some data: See chart below |
| Table W14 | below | |
| | Distribution of participants in the recognition process by assessment method..... | No data |
| Table W15 | | |
| | Distribution of participants in the recognition process by reason for undertaking a recognition process..... | No data |
| Table W16 | | |
| | Distribution of participants in the recognition process by labour force status..... | No data |
| Table W17 | | |
| Table W18 | Distribution of employed participants in the recognition process by occupational | |

| | | |
|-------------|---|--------------------------|
| | status..... | No data |
| Table W 19 | Distribution of employed participants in the recognition process by industry..... | No data |
| Table W 20 | Distribution of participants in the recognition process by educational attainment..... | No data |
| Table W 21 | Distribution of participants in the recognition process by aggregated educational attainment..... | No data |
| Table W 22 | Distribution of participants in the recognition process by place of birth..... | No data |
| Table W 23 | Distribution of participants in the recognition process by aggregated place of birth..... | No data |
| Table W 24 | Distribution of participants in the recognition process by duration of recognition process..... | No data (varies greatly) |
| Table W 25 | Distribution of participants in the recognition process by region of residence..... | No data |
| Table W 26a | Participation and non participation in the recognition process..... | No data |
| Table W 26b | Reasons for not participating in the recognition process..... | No data |

3.4 Outcomes for individuals, of participation in the recognition process

| | | |
|------------|---|---------|
| Table W 27 | Distribution of participants in the recognition process by level of attainment after the recognition process..... | No data |
| Table W 28 | Distribution of participants in the recognition process by labour force status before the recognition process and six months after..... | No data |
| Table W 29 | Distribution of participants in the recognition process by labour force status before learning and 12 months after the end of this process..... | No data |

3.5 Enterprises and Employers

| | | |
|------------|---|---------|
| Table W 30 | Distribution of employed participants in the recognition of non-formal and informal learning by size of the establishment they are working in | No data |
|------------|---|---------|

3.6 Recognition providers

| | | |
|------------|--|---------|
| Table W 31 | Characteristics of recognition providers, delivering a formal recognition (qualification, certificate, credits, etc) for non-formal and informal learning..... | No data |
|------------|--|---------|

3.7 Educational Institutions

| | | |
|------------|---|---------|
| Table W 32 | Distribution of students that received recognition by size and by level of educational institutions | No data |
| Table W 33 | Characteristics of students that have changed field of study during the year..... | No data |
| Table W 34 | Characteristics of recognition provided by education institutions..... | No data |

3.8 Mobility and transition

| | | |
|------------|---|---------|
| Table W 35 | Distribution of students that have changed education institution during the year..... | No data |
|------------|---|---------|

| | | |
|----------------|---|---------|
| Table W 36 | Distribution of students that have changed field of study during the year..... | No data |
| Table W 37 | Distribution of students (newly graduates or drop-out students) that have found a job..... | No data |
| Table W 38 | Distribution of geographically mobile students during the year..... | No data |
| Table W 39 | Distribution of employed people that have changed job during the year..... | No data |
| Table W 40 | Distribution of employed people that have gone back to full-time formal study by using the recognition of non-formal and informal learning during the year..... | No data |
| Table W 41 | Distribution of employed people that have undertaken part-time formal study while working by using the recognition of non-formal/informal learning during the year..... | No data |
| Table W 42 | Distribution of unemployed people that have found a job by using the recognition of non-formal and informal learning during the year..... | No data |
| Table W 43 | Distribution of active people that have changed jobs during the year..... | No data |
| 3.9 | Broad types of non formal programmes that lead to recognition | |
| Table W 44 | Broad types of non formal programmes that are being recognised..... | No data |
| 4 | Tables for the female population | |
| Table F 12-F44 | | No data |
| 5 | Table for the male population | |
| Table M12-M44 | | No data |
| 6 | Tables for future projection | |
| 6.1 | Estimated proportion (%) of provision of formal and non-formal learning programmes at post-secondary education and training | |
| Table FP1 | Proportion of provision of formal and non-formal learning programmes..... | No data |
| 6.2 | Estimated proportion (%) of participation in formal and non-formal learning | |
| Table FP2 | Proportion of participation in formal and non-formal learning programmes..... | No data |
| 6.3 | Estimated proportion (%) of recognition of formal and non-formal learning | |
| Table FP3 | Proportion of recognition of learning outcomes from formal and non-formal/informal learning opportunities..... | No data |

3. Tables for the whole population

3.1. Financial resources invested in recognition of non formal and informal learning

| Table W1 – Total 2006-07 budget for recognition of non formal and informal learning by source of funds | | |
|---|--|-----------------|
| Source of funds | Expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning | % of GDP |
| Public | \$500,000 provided in 2006-07 budget (Note* No designated funds for RPL in 2004-05 or 2005-06, other than salaries for two staff within the Department of Advanced Education and Employment, formerly Saskatchewan Learning) | negligible |
| Trade Unions | NA | NA |
| Private (other than individual) | NA | NA |
| Individuals themselves | NA | NA |
| <i>Other 1</i> | NA | NA |
| <i>Other 2</i> | NA | NA |
| Total | \$500,000 in 2006-07 No expenditures in 2004-05 or 2005-06 | |
| <i>Source: Saskatchewan Department of Advanced Education and Employment</i> | | |

| Table W2 – Total public expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning – Year 2006-07 | | |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Expenditure | % of all public expenditure | % of GDP |
| \$500,000 | Unknown | Unknown |
| <i>Source: Saskatchewan Department of Advanced Education and Employment</i> | | |

Notes to Table W2:

This table concentrates on the first line of Table 1, that is, public funding of recognition of non formal and informal learning (*LI*). The only idea is to provide the proportion of the public budget that is devoted to recognition of non formal and informal learning.

| Table W3 – Public expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning as a percentage of total public educational expenditure – Year 2005-06 (most recent year available) | | |
|---|--|---|
| Level of public expenditure on education | Public expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning (%) | Public expenditure on all other educational activities (%) |
| \$553.5 million | 0 | 100% |
| <i>Source: Saskatchewan Learning Annual Report 2005-06</i> | | |

| Table W4 – Destination of public spending on recognition of non formal and informal learning – Year 2006-07 | | |
|--|---|----------|
| | Public expenditure (in local currency) | % |
| Buildings | 0 | |
| Staff | 0 | |
| Assessment, jury | 0 | |
| Incentives (Ad campaigns etc) | 0 | |
| <i>Other 1</i> | In the 2006-07, provincial funding for recognition services was provided, to be allocated as follows: SIAST - \$250,000; Regional Colleges-\$105,000; Dumont Technical Institute - \$40,000; Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission - \$25,000; Recognizing Coordinating Committee - \$80,000. | |
| Total | \$500,000 | 100 |
| <i>Source: Saskatchewan Department of Advanced Education and Employment</i> | | |

| Table W5 – Public expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning by level of government – Year 2006-07 | | |
|---|--|----------|
| Level of government | Expenditure (in local currency) | % |
| Central | Provincial Government - \$500,000 | 100% |
| Regional | NA | |
| Other local (please specify) | NA | |
| Cities | NA | |
| <i>Other 1</i> | NA | |
| <i>Other 2</i> | NA | |
| Total | \$500,000 | 100 |
| <i>Source: Saskatchewan Department of Advanced Education and Employment</i> | | |

| Table W6 – Total expenditure on recognition of non formal and informal learning as a percentage of total educational expenditure (whether public or not) – Year 2005-06 | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| Expenditure on education | Expenditure on recognition (%) | Expenditure on all other educational activities (%) |
| \$553.5 million | 0% | 100% |
| <i>Source: Saskatchewan Learning 2005-06 Annual Report</i> | | |

| Table W7 – Destination of total spending on recognition of non formal and informal learning – Year 2006-07 | | |
|---|---|----------|
| | Expenditure (in local currency) | % |
| Buildings | NA | |
| Staff | NA | |
| Assessment, jury | NA | |
| Incentives (Ad campaigns etc) | NA | |
| <i>Other 1</i> | No designated funds allocated in 2004-05 or 2005-06. For 2006-07 the provincial government budgeted \$500,000 to be allocated as follows: SIAST - \$250,000; Regional Colleges \$105,000; Dumont Technical Institute - \$40,000; Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission - \$25,000; and Recognition of Prior Learning Coordinating Group - \$80,000. | 100% |
| Total | \$500,000 in 2006-07 | 100 |

Source: Government of Saskatchewan Department of Advanced Education and Employment

| Table W14 – Distribution of participants in the recognition process by type of subject – Year 2005-06 | | | | |
|--|------------------|--|--|----------|
| Type of learning outcomes recognised | Frequency | | | % |
| Total SIAST institution only 932 | 932 | | | 100 |
| Community Service | 494 | | | 53% |
| Science and Health | 288 | | | 31% |
| Business and Entrepreneurial | 74 | | | 8% |
| Nursing | 60 | | | 6% |
| Industrial | 7 | | | 1% |
| Technology | 9 | | | 1% |

Source: Saskatchewan Institute of Science and Technology Plar Requests by Division 2005-06

Notes to Table W14:

From the total number of participants, a distinction is introduced in terms of type of learning outcomes recognised; the country should provide the categories and a possibility is to do it by sector: agriculture, service, industry and to break these categories down as far as possible (see Table W10 or W44 as possible examples).