

Tool 11: Bridging any Gaps, Creating a Learning Plan

The assessments from Tools 1 to 6 and in particular Tool 7 (the Interview) will all identify aspects of the candidate's knowledge, skills and behaviours that may need development. Learning needs generally fall into one or more of the following categories:

1. English language. It is probably best to have formal language lessons, which can be augmented with practical exposure at work and during social events. Canadian cultural aspects should also be covered.
2. Technical and administrative training on the processes, materials, equipment and software programs which the organization uses, including admin (such as expense claims, time sheets), legal, health, safety and environmental aspects. Some of this will be the same as the on-boarding for any new Canadian recruit; some will be needed for newcomers to Canada and B.C.
3. Training and experience in order to fulfil the requirements for a regulated profession. This is likely to be a longer term goal, with very specific rules about what is eligible.
4. Communication, supervision and management skills may need to be developed for the Canadian context in order to get the greatest benefit from the new recruit's potential. This will probably need to be augmented, over and above what a Canadian recruit would require, because of the importance of learning and conforming to acceptable Canadian norms.

Having identified the learning needs, discuss them with the candidate to identify practical development opportunities. There is a tendency to immediately assume that a formal course (either in-house or provided by external vendors) is the most appropriate solution for each and every learning need, but this is both expensive and probably not all that true. Other options that you can discuss are:

- assigning a formal "buddy" to act as a mentor, a trusted person who can act as a role model, and who will answer questions and discuss issues.
- giving particular duties or assigning to a particular team, so as to work on particular projects and tasks. Work-based learning (including with a mentor) is probably the most effective and most cost-effective way to learn, especially when it comes to attitudes and values, behaviours, skills and achieving high levels of competency.

Funding provided by:

- distance learning, open learning and on-line courses can be effective as an introduction and for learning knowledge; study generally takes place outside office hours.
- formal education classes in evening and on weekends.
- and for matters relating to culture and communication: community and social events, sport, professional and voluntary activities are invaluable.

In addition, there may be formal learning courses that are sponsored by the employer.

Having identified appropriate learning activities, the candidate can record all of this as a personal development plan, with tangible and measurable learning objectives, and an indicative time frame. The candidate should own this plan; it is the candidate who will make the effort to learn and who will be the greatest beneficiary. The employer may be able to help with resources such as study time and course fees. The employer also needs to assign a manager or someone from HR to monitor progress and conduct periodic, formal progress reviews of the candidate's development plan.