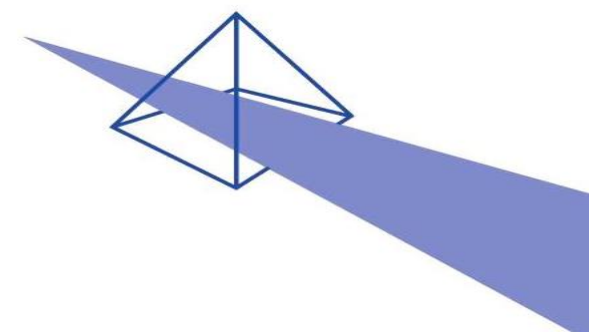


28 and 29 November 2016
Thessaloniki, Greece

How to make learning visible

Strategies for implementing validation
of non-formal and informal learning



Bonnie Kennedy

Executive Director

Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment

Increasing RPL visibility through awareness and quality assurance



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Increasing RPL visibility through awareness and quality practice

- Context - past and present
- Learning from international partners
- Support for monitoring and professional development (advising, tools, systems, assessment, public policy)
- Current activities and research
- Pan-Canadian RPL Quality Assurance



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About CAPLA

- Began in 1994, incorporated not-for profit, Canada's only national RPL membership organization, NGO, an elected Board of Directors
- Advocates for formal recognition of knowledge, skills and abilities acquired through work and life experience; support efforts to improve access for those seeking recognition for their prior learning (Indigenous peoples, disadvantaged groups, immigrants, non-completers)
- Provides professional development opportunities (webinars, yearly conferences, training), creates working groups, Strategic Advisory Panel for the Recognition of Prior Learning
- Partner with a range of stakeholders, nationally and internationally, to bring about change



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Opportunities and Challenges

- RPL is a 'movement' in Canada
- CAPLA is a practitioner organization - RPL champions are passionate about their work
- All learning must be valued, respected and recognized at appropriate levels
- RPL is a labour force development strategy; a bridging tool into education/training programs, into regulated trades and professions
- RPL is decentralized in Canada and found in diverse settings; initiatives may be funded by the federal, provincial/territorial governments or other sources
- Concern about the rigour of RPL



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How does the pan-Canadian RPL Quality Assurance MANUAL define RPL ?

- RPL is a set of processes that allows individuals to identify, document, be assessed and gain recognition for their prior learning. The focus is on the learning, rather than on where or how the learning occurred. Knowledge, skills and abilities gained from life experiences may be formal, non-formal or informal. RPL processes may serve several purposes including licensure, credit or advanced standing at an academic institution, employment, career planning, recruitment or self-knowledge.



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What is the Canadian Labour Force Development Board?

The Canadian Labour Force Development Board (CLFDB) is a national advisory body made up of:

- labour market partner organizations—employers, workers and unions;
- groups seeking equality—women, aboriginal people, people from visible minority groups and people with disabilities;
- training and education services—schools, universities, training institutions, educators.

These partners work together to improve training and access to employment for all members of the Canadian labour force. The goal of the CLFDB is to achieve a system for education, training and employment that is effective, efficient and equitable.

The CLFDB provides advice on a wide range of education and training issues. Groups that have worked with the CLFDB include: national and provincial governments, employers, unions, professional organizations and other groups that are interested in how Canada's labour market works.

Over the past two years, a CLFDB Working Group has studied how Canada can improve its labour force development system. Partner organizations were asked for ideas that would:

- make the most of the resources and skills available in Canada;
- make it easier for individuals to get into education and training programs at any school or training centre in Canada;
- make it easier to find a job in all parts of the country;
- help individuals move easily from education or training programs to work.

From its consultations and research, the CLFDB has concluded that the increased use of PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION (PLAR) could benefit all Canadians. A system with national standards would help recognize what a person knows and can do. It can make better use of education and training resources, by targetting the right training to people who need it. It can help people find out what skills they may need for specific jobs. PLAR can also encourage labour market partners to find new ways of working together.

The CLFDB recognizes that there is much work yet to be done on PLAR by all the labour market partners.

Its use is currently limited and not all Canadians have access to a PLAR process.

This brochure is one way to encourage the expanded and effective use of PLAR in the future.



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What should a good PLAR system look like?

The first step towards an effective national approach to PRIOR LEARNING ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION is to agree on standards. National standards for PLAR will provide a framework to make sure PLAR is developed in a manner that serves users well.

Based on consultations with its partner organizations and people experienced in PLAR assessment, the CLFDB recommends the following minimum standards for PLAR:

1 PLAR must be accessible and relevant to people as individuals. It must focus on the unique needs and abilities of the individual.

5 The PLAR process must be effective. It must provide the opportunity for recognition of prior learning, but it must not hold out false promises.

6 The PLAR process must be transparent. The individual must know the criteria and standards used to assess his or her skills and knowledge.

7 The assessment must be reliable. The criteria and standards must be recognized and respected by all the labour market partners. This principle applies to occupational and skill standards, the learning outcomes stated for a specific course or training program, and the credentials required for a specific job or occupational group.

assessment. Individuals should have the opportunity to choose how their assessment will be done. If necessary, they should get help to make their choice.

11 Recognition awarded through PLAR should be considered equal to recognition awarded in the traditional manner.

12 Recognition awarded through PLAR should be transferable between organizations, provinces and territories.

13 PLAR must be an option or opportunity, not a mandatory process.

14 If a person is not satisfied with the PLAR assessment, an appeal procedure must be available.



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2 Assessment and recognition must be of learning (knowledge, skills, and judgement acquired through study or experience) not of experience.

3 The PLAR process must be fair and equitable. It must be barrier-free and bias-free.

4 The PLAR process must be efficient. It must make the best use of resources for the individual.

8 The assessment tools and their PLAR application must be valid. They must be recognized and accepted by all the labour market partners.

9 Individuals assessing prior learning must be trained to perform this task.

10 The assessing organization must provide a number of ways to carry out an

The CLFDB believes that the application of national standards to PLAR processes will ensure that individuals receive a fair assessment of their skills and knowledge from organizations that are recognized and accountable for their work. As an organization, the CLFDB will continue to advocate for, and work on, their development.



UNESCO GUIDELINES

for the Recognition, Validation and Accreditation
of the Outcomes of Non-formal and Informal Learning



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European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning





Monitoring the use of validation of non-formal and informal learning

Thematic report for the 2016 update
of the European inventory on validation



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- UNESCO - Guidelines for RVA(2012) Key areas of action at the national level- 4 (2,3) “establish mechanisms to adopt credible and quality RVA procedures, standards and instruments as well as awarding qualifications; facilitate RVA implementation by putting in place effective administrative processes for receiving applications, organizing assessment and providing feedback on outcomes, recording results, awarding qualifications and designing appeal processes...” (pg. 6)
- CEDEFOP – European guidelines for validating non-formal and informal learning(2015); Monitoring the Use of Validation- Thematic Report (2016) “The main enabler is a clear, comprehensive framework for validation that explicitly includes a way of monitoring the process. The system for monitoring VNFIL needs to be an integral part of the quality assurance system, under a systematic application of the quality circle (plan, do check, change)...” (pg.39)
- OECD - Recognising Non-Formal and Informal Learning (Werquin 2010) “Data gathering may also provide an opportunity for standardising international data collection, as well as national data collection (as opposed to local or sub-local information gathering) in federal states or countries with strong decentralized forms of government.” (pg.85)



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Global Report on Adult Learning and Education (GRALE) Sept. 2016

“However, learning today is increasingly taking place outside the formal sector, thanks also to the emergence of new technologies. Non-formal and informal learning are particularly difficult to track, and countries lack effective systems to monitor, measure and record information on the outcomes of such ALE activities.”
pg. 135

“Governments are making efforts to recognize and validate non-formal and informal learning, and to translate them into qualifications. However, these areas of ALE need to be the very design of education systems.” pg. 136



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PLA DATA TRACKING

Proposing a Model for Institutional Tracking and Reporting of Credit Earned through Prior Learning Assessment

By Rebecca Klein-Collins



Linking Learning and Work

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CAPLA's RPL Quality Assurance MANUAL

- cites the importance of RPL reporting, activity tracking, data collection, ongoing monitoring and review (pgs. 15, 19, 27, 36, 37) as a requirement for a quality RPL system
- identifies training for advisors and assessors as a guiding principle (Professionally Supported) and a key component of any quality RPL system. The importance of training (professional competences, RVA personnel, developing evaluators) is also highlighted by UNESCO (RVA Guidelines 2012- pg. 6), CEDEFOP (European Guidelines 2015- pgs. 32-35) and OECD (Recognising Non-Formal and Informal Learning. Werquin 2010 - pg. 80)



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The 2016 Recognizing Learning Conference

THE CAPLA RPL BOOT CAMP

October 14-15, 2016 • Toronto, Ontario

Is your institution or organization

- ▶ working on updating your PLAR/RPL policies and procedures?
- ▶ committed to quality assurance and continuous improvement?
- ▶ authenticating immigrants' skills and knowledge?
- ▶ assessing non-classroom learning for prospective students?
- ▶ supporting under-represented groups in your community?
- ▶ exploring alternative learner pathways for those wanting a credential or certification?
- ▶ helping business and industry assess and recognize workplace skills and competencies?

Making
the
invisible,
visible

If you have answered 'yes' to any of these questions,

The CAPLA Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

2016 Boot Camp will help you reach your personal, professional and organizational goals. It will provide a unique opportunity to consider quality-assured RPL systems, tools, assessment, advising and policy.

Sponsorship CAPLA is looking for individuals and organizations who are interested and committed to RPL. Please consider supporting us as we continue to strengthen RPL in Canada. Contact us at 613-860-1747 or capla@agendamangers.com to learn more.

Venue We are happy to welcome you to **The Grand Hotel & Suites**, located in downtown Toronto. Call the hotel directly at 1-877-324-7263, and reference CAPLA to take advantage of our preferred conference rate of **\$189**.

To register visit capla.ca/register.
Conference fees start as low as \$499.

To purchase your copy of the
RPL QA MANUAL and get program
updates, visit capla.ca/conference
or call the Conference Secretariat at
1-877-731-1333.

capla.ca/conference

6^{FOR} CREDENTIAL ASSESSMENT

STEPS

FOR REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PEOPLE



1 Determine when an alternative method is needed

2 Gather information and available evidence

Reconstruct the applicant's history:

- Any available transcripts (including partial and non-official)
- An application
- A sworn statement
- An interview



3 Develop a background paper and portfolio of evidence

Assemble evidence for the applicant's claims:

- Any available transcripts
- Student IDs
- Class lists
- Proof of tuition payment
- Admittance to state examinations
- Copies of licenses/certificates
- Statements of professional standing
- Witness statements



4 Assess the background paper and portfolio

5 Assess the applicant's competencies, if needed

Possible forms of assessment:

- Interviews
- Sample work
- Special projects
- Skills assessments
- Examinations



6 Make a determination regarding recognition and placement



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Assessment – Methods, Tools, and Processes continued

Assessment Tools

Individuals should be able to receive validation, recognition, and credit for their learning regardless of how, when, or where it was achieved. Assessors should select appropriate assessment tool(s) to make best use of limited resources and available expertise.

It is imperative to note that assessment instruments used for graduation from a program are generally not suitable for RPL purposes. Select a method most applicable for the type of learning being assessed. Offer flexibility of assessment methods. The list of examples here is not exhaustive, but rather a sampling of common assessment methods.

OBSERVATION/DEMONSTRATIONS: In this method, individuals are assessed against the assessment criteria as they perform tasks. They are observed in either a “natural” setting, e.g., work or community, or in a simulated situation, e.g., role play or Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) by a trained assessor.

INTERVIEWS: Interviews allow individuals to describe in detail what they know and can do, how they have solved problems, and responded to contingencies, etc. In summative assessments, interviews are most often used in conjunction with other assessment methods.

SELF-ASSESSMENTS: Self-assessments allow an individual to match specific knowledge, skills, and abilities against established criteria. They are helpful for individuals, advisors, and assessors to find a starting

point from which to establish competence. They will later gather evidence or proof of that learning.

EVIDENCE COLLECTION: This is a collection of proof of learning. It will demonstrate an individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities. Examples include log books, notations, product samples, or a skills passport.

PORTFOLIOS: A portfolio is generally a more formal and organized collection of evidence developed by an individual. It may be paper based or digital. It is used by individuals to reflect on and verify their knowledge, skill, and abilities.

WRITTEN EXAMINATIONS: These assessment tools require individuals to respond to a series of specific questions, often in the form of essays, short-answer or multiple choice test items. They are used most often to assess knowledge about a specific subject.

CREDENTIAL OR QUALIFICATION EVALUATION: In this process, an individual's education and training credentials, or professional qualifications are evaluated to determine authenticity and relevance to Canadian standards. The process compares the credential documents to Canadian standards for a course, program, professional license or employment expectations.¹⁶ Since there is great variability in the nature of education and training programs around the world, the evaluation of credentials and qualifications earned outside of Canada requires great care.

Assessment Criteria

All quality RPL programs require outcomes or competency statements that are easy-to-understand. The descriptions and criteria are used by individuals, advisors and assessors to guide the assessment process. These criteria serve as the “road map” to help individuals determine how well their skills, knowledge and abilities match the expected standards. These also help to identify gaps or learning differences. They identify relevant sources and types of evidence.

Advisors can use the statements to support learners and to liaise with assessors, subject matter experts, who are involved in the RPL process.

Assessors use the descriptors and criteria during assessment, to determine how well RPL candidates meet the criteria. Descriptors and criteria also serve as a valuable tool to give specific and motivational feedback at the end of the assessment process. Descriptors and criteria may vary for different contexts.

Learning outcomes reflect the learning expectations of a course or program. They are most often developed and used in education and training programs. Learning outcomes describe what the learner should know and be able to do at the end of a course or program.

Occupational standards describe performance expectations at work and are therefore closely





PREPARE TO WORK IN CANADA

Are you planning to come to Canada, or are you now living in Canada? Your education and your English or French language ability are important elements in finding employment in Canada. But equally important to finding employment is what you have learned from your work and life experiences. This website and directory of services and resources provides you with useful electronic links which you can access before you arrive in Canada or when you have settled in Canada. Find out more about "why your experience matters."

CLICK HERE TO LEARN
**WHY YOUR
EXPERIENCE
MATTERS**

Experience Matters

STEP 1 GETTING STARTED

The first step to finding employment is to undertake assessments of your work and life experiences, foreign credentials and language ability.

Work and Life Experiences – Assessment & Recognition

You have had many experiences in your life and work, both before you came to Canada and upon arrival in Canada. From these experiences you have gained knowledge, skills and abilities that are valuable. In Canada, the process of examining that learning and knowledge is called Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR). Your life and work experiences can include jobs, training, business ownership, military service, studying on your own, and working in the home. PLAR is a valuable process that can help you identify and validate your learning from your experiences.

[Click here](#) to learn more about PLAR and why your experience matters

Foreign Credentials – Assessment & Recognition

Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) is a formal process of evaluating your educational credentials (such as degrees, diplomas and certificates) from your home country. In Canada there are assessment organizations that conduct this evaluation for you for a fee. In some cases, professional regulatory bodies, colleges, universities, or employers conduct this service, and may be able to do it before you arrive in Canada.

[Click here](#) to learn more about the assessment of your credentials and why your experience matters

Language - Assessment

Language proficiency in English and/or French is essential for not only immigration to and citizenship in Canada, but also for finding a job. In Canada, there are a number of different language assessments used for various purposes.

[Click here](#) to learn more about language assessments and why your experience matters

STEP 2 MOVING FORWARD

The second step to finding employment is to continue to work on your assessments and meet with an expert to help you make the best choices. In some cases this may be to begin your job search. In other cases, it may be to connect with an employer, an education institution or a regulatory body.

[Click here for the Directory of services](#) to find the right employment service, institution or regulatory body

Employment

There are many employment agencies that can help you with your job search. Immigrant serving organizations across Canada have years of experience working with newcomers to find employment. These agencies can,

- ▶ Assist you with your PLAR
- ▶ Assist you in determining if you have the appropriate skills, training, abilities and language for a job
- ▶ Connect you with employers in your local community

[Click here](#) to go to the Directory of services

Educational Institutions

Educational institutions are located in all provinces and territories in Canada. These institutions can,

- ▶ Assist you to get your international academic credentials assessed
- ▶ Help you take a standardized language test
- ▶ Help you gain academic credit for the skills, abilities and knowledge you have gained through work and life experiences

[Click here](#) to go to the Directory of services

Regulatory Bodies

It is important to contact the appropriate regulatory body for your profession. Regulatory bodies can,

- ▶ provide you with information on language tests
- ▶ show you how they use PLAR to evaluate your knowledge and skills

[Click here](#) to go to the Directory of services

CLICK HERE TO
**EXPLORE
THE
DIRECTORY**



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The Conference Board
of Canada

**Brain Gain 2015:
The State of Canada's Learning Recognition System**

Dr. Michael Bloom

Vice President, Industry and Business Strategy
The Conference Board of Canada

**Canadian Immigration Summit 2016
April 5, 2016**



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Brain Gain 2015 re-examines the learning recognition issue and updates the economic analysis - \$13.4 – 17.0 billion in annual income would be gained if Canada's learning recognition gap was eliminated



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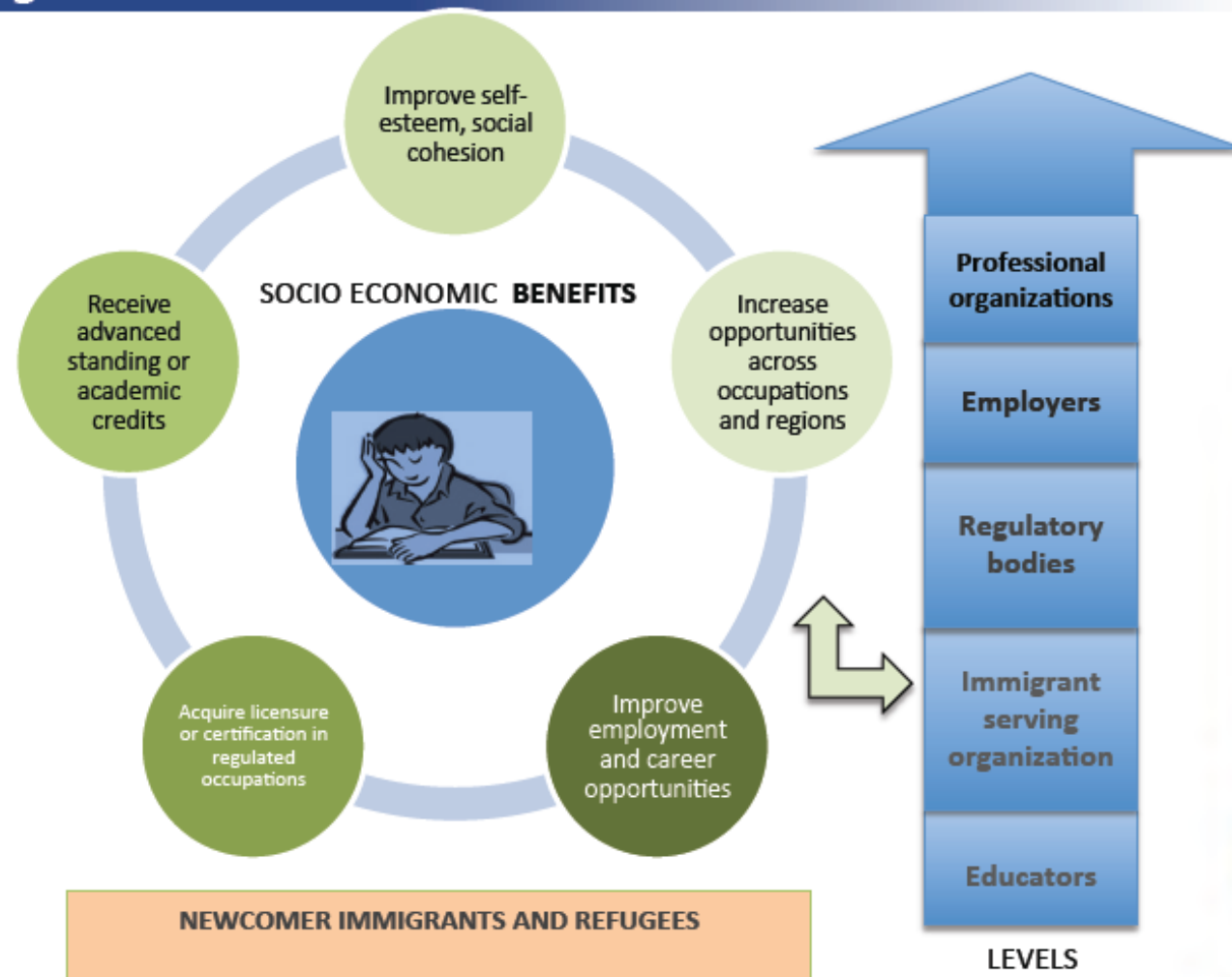
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- **Options for Action – Expand Use of PLAR Systems and Tools and Communicate Widely.**
 - Nine guiding principles: accessible, consistent, fair, respectful, valid, flexible, rigorous, transparent.
 - CAPLA's Manual: *Quality Assurance for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Canada* (2015) is the leading guide/toolkit.
 - Provides organizations and institutions with a clear framework for developing, implementing RPL.



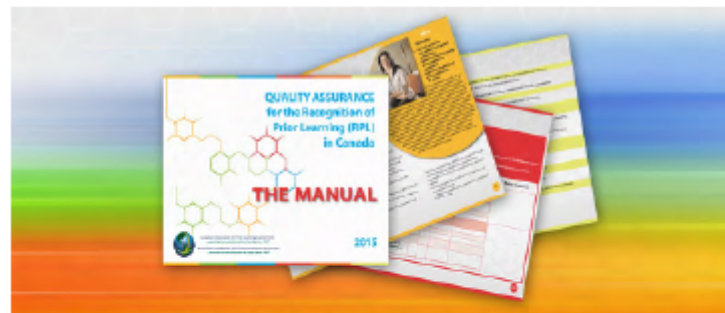
Recognition of Prior Learning as a tool to assist with the Integration of Skilled Immigrants into Canada's Labour Market

The recognition of prior learning (RPL)¹ is a systematic process of identifying, assessing and recognizing what a person knows and can do.



Moving Forward

- Promote Recognized Prior Learning tools and techniques to our stakeholder networks at upcoming events and fora
 - P/T government members of the Settlement Working Group, the Foreign Qualification Recognition Group, and the Language Forum;
 - Settlement and Employment Service providers (National Settlement Council);
 - Regulatory bodies, National associations, Educational institutions



Using research to increase awareness

- Portfolios can be transformative for candidates – self-confidence; reflection and analysis as a higher-order process
- RPL is a joint enterprise between client and assessor; centrality of the assessor/candidate relationship
- Value of dialogue/competency conversation as an RPL tool
- Importance of advisor/assessor values



- Considering our ‘assessment philosophy’ as RPL practitioners (Jen Hamer – University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia)
- The ‘third’ space: where candidate (workplace) and assessor (institution) meet - the neutral space “to transform different coded knowledge in a trans-disciplinary way” (Loffie Naudé, The RPL Hub, Pretoria, S. Africa)
- Dialogue as an assessment tool
 - the competency conversation (S. Africa)
 - the professional conversation (R. Peterson, Centre for Assessment of Prior Learning, Manukau Institute of Technology Auckland, N. Zealand)

plaio.org



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QUALITY ASSURANCE for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Canada

THE MANUAL



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2015



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Everyone who depends on RPL outcomes has to have confidence in the decisions made as a result of the RPL process:

- Learners/applicants
- Employers
- Educators
- Trainers
- Regulators
- Human resource specialists
- Government policy makers



About the CAPLA QA MANUAL

- Enables organizations and institutions to *develop, implement and evaluate* RPL processes and services
- Focuses on continuous improvement
- Written in plain language for different stakeholders
- Promotes validity, reliability and fairness



What are these issues?

1

Skills and
knowledge often
not recognized

2

Canada has a
highly mobile
workforce

3

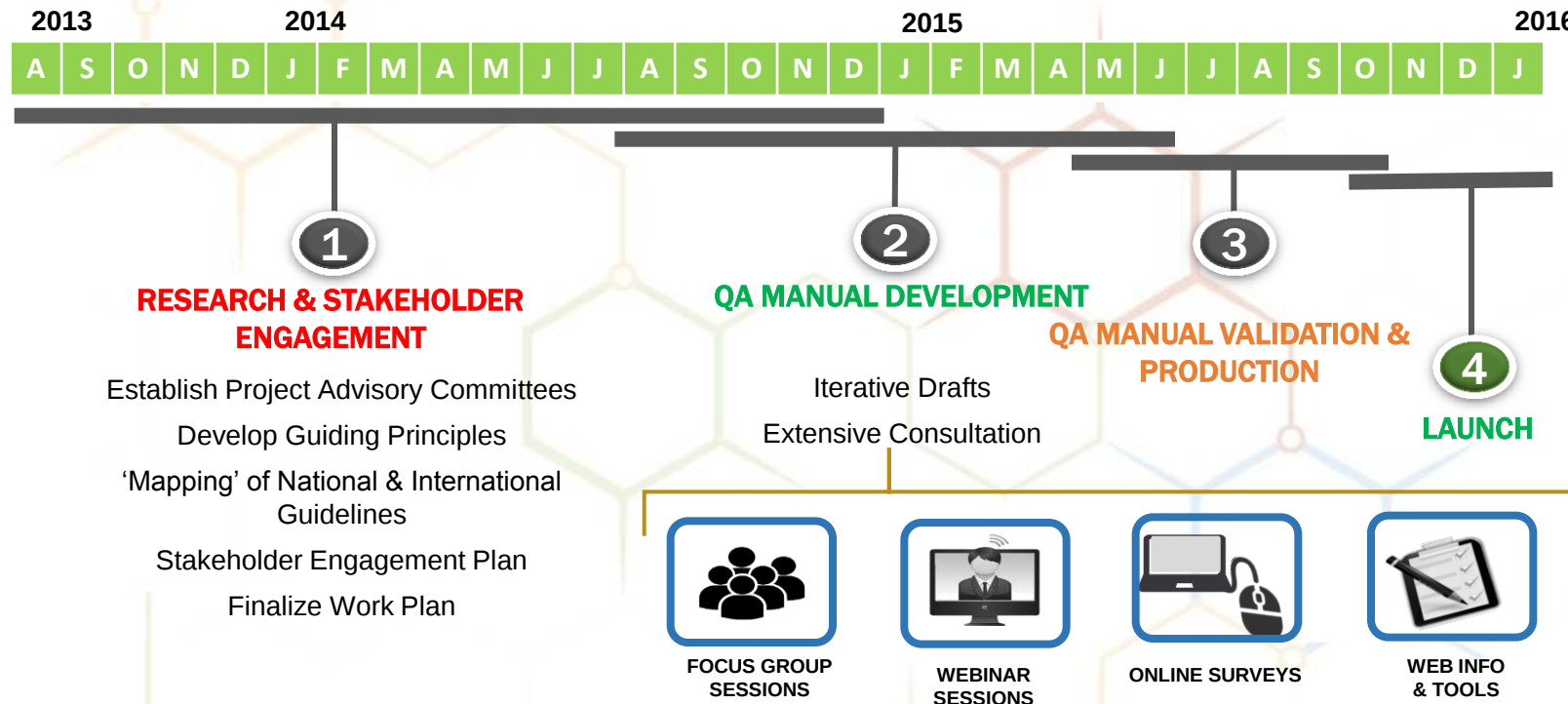
In a typical year,
Canada welcomes
300,000 immigrants

4

Canada's learning
recognition system
is diverse and
decentralized



Overview of CAPLA's RPL Quality Assurance Project



Other Key Features

Illustrative Case Studies

- ▶ Actual stories
- ▶ Different contexts
- ▶ Focus on elements of quality practice

Self-Audit Checklists



Examples from Different Perspectives

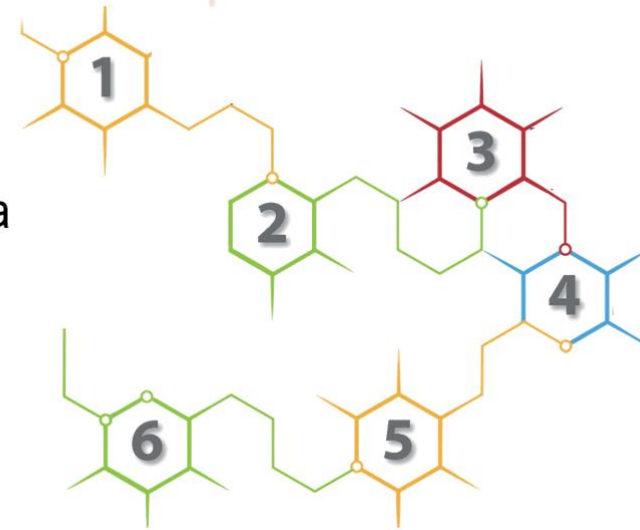
- ▶ Individuals
- ▶ Institutions
- ▶ Organizations
- ▶ Employers
- ... and more



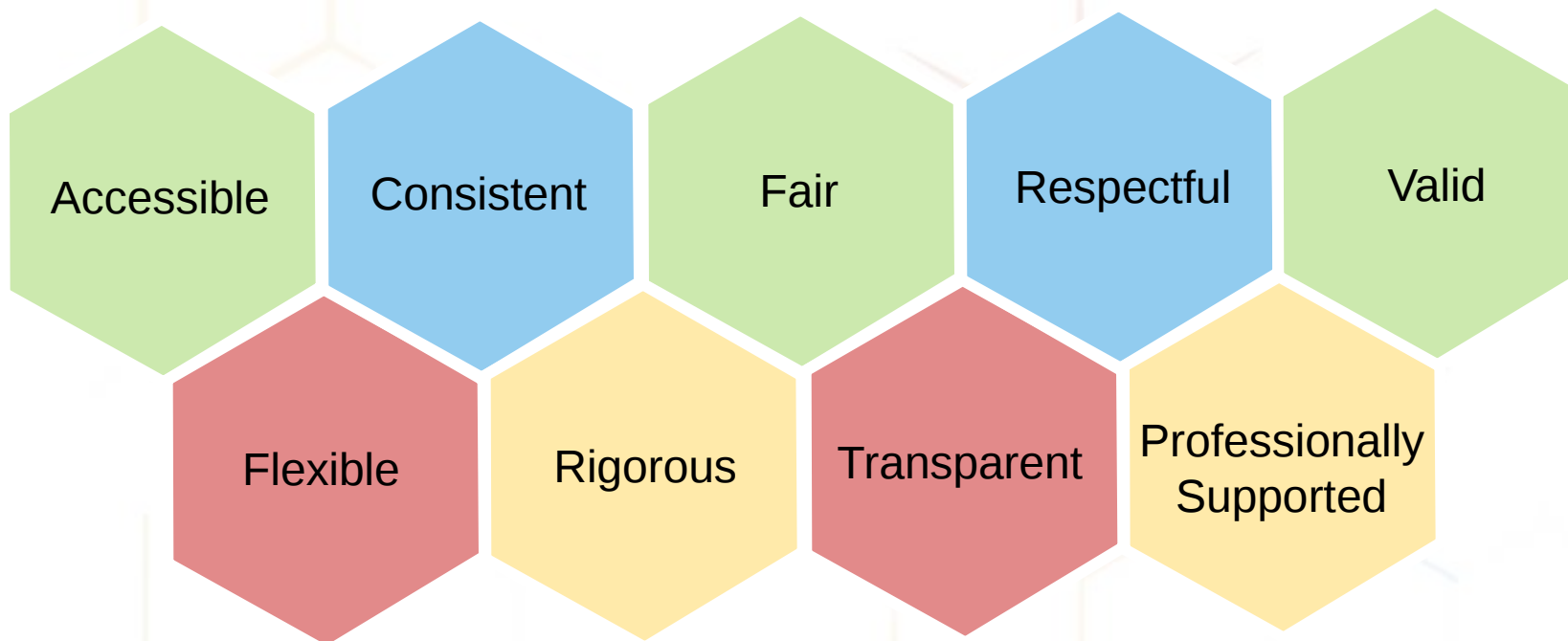
About QA and RPL Systems and Services

Guiding Principles for
Quality RPL Practice in Canada

Six Steps for Quality RPL



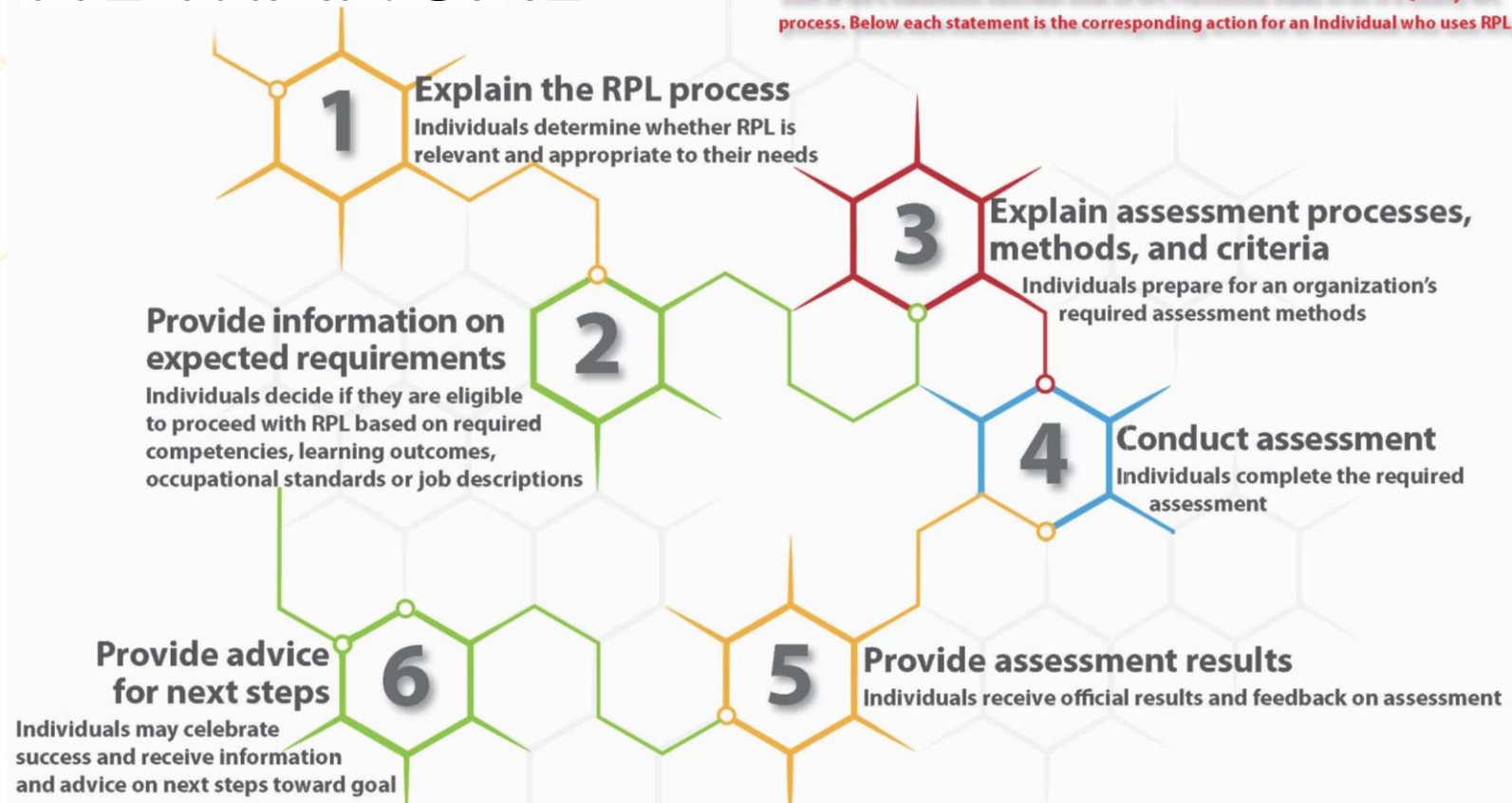
Guiding Principles for Quality in RPL Practice



THE MANUAL

6 Steps for Quality RPL*

Each of the 6 statements describes what an RPL Practitioner needs to do in a Quality RPL process. Below each statement is the corresponding action for an Individual who uses RPL.





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bethechangecareers.com

Thank you

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