



The CSMLS Workforce Integrated Learning Pilot Keys to Success (April 2023)

Overview

The Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) is the national professional association and certifying body for medical laboratory technologists (MLTs) and assistants in Canada. It administers Prior Learning Assessment (PLA), on behalf of eight provincial Canadian MLT regulators, for clients educated outside of Canada to establish their eligibility for the national certification examination.

Internationally educated MLTs apply to CSMLS each year to have their credentials assessed. In most cases, these individuals do not meet Canadian standards immediately; gaps in their education/ experience must be remediated before they become eligible to challenge the certification exam. One way of addressing these gaps is through a supervised clinical placement based on the CSMLS “ideal clinical placement blueprint”. In an effort to promote this pathway, the CSMLS administered an 18-month pilot of its Workforce Integrated Learning (WIL) Program aimed at connecting employees with eligible learners. The objectives of this pilot were to:

- Establish clinical placements to address learning needs based on the results of the PLA;
- Create and implement a comprehensive, national, low-risk job candidate assessment and evaluation tool for participating medical laboratories; and
- Increase IEMLTs success rate on their certification exam.
- Reduce incidences of under and unemployment by creating permanent job opportunities for IEMLTs.

Funding received from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) allowed for subsidies to be provided to both employers and learners. Feedback collected from all participants helped to inform the keys to success described below.

Key to Success

Several promising practices were identified throughout the pilot. Other professions or employers looking to model this program are encouraged to consider the following lessons learned:

- Programs should develop a common set of criteria/documentation prior to initiating placements that meet the needs of all stakeholders. At a minimum this should include:
 - i) A clear set of client eligibility criteria;

- ii) An agreement between the regulator/association evaluating PLA and the employer that sets out the purpose, duration and parameters of the placement including associated subsidies.
 - iii) A similar agreement between the learner and the regulator (and if required, the employer as well);
 - iv) Forms for eligible expenses including subsidies;
 - v) Surveys aimed at gathering information/feedback from employers and learners post-placement.
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- Strict eligibility criteria should be established such that the gaps that requiring remediation can be addressed within a reasonable time period (i.e., 4-12 weeks). Learners should have sufficient education and clinical experience such that they are safe to practice under supervision.
 - Significant communication and outreach are required to recruit both employers and learners. Ongoing efforts need to be made to refresh the pool of eligible learners, as they qualify.
 - Employers should work with their insurance provider to develop a general liability policy suitable for learners. Costs can be high – this expenditure and who will bear the cost must be established prior to launch.
 - Source as many employers (rural and urban) representing as many practice environments as possible to ensure that suitable placements exist for all eligible learners.
 - Sufficient technical and support staff need to be committed to the project to allow for rapid conflict resolution.
 - Consider “return-to-service” agreements between employers and learners. Employers invest significant time and resources to train learners. This willingness to train potential employees vanishes if employment is accepted elsewhere.
 - Consider honorariums for learners – completing a structured clinical placement is time consuming, and often requires time away from paid work. Simple time sheets can help with administration.