

As you begin to compare work skills analysis tools, you need to be clear about your resources and organizational needs.

1. Where do you find information about these products and services?

You can find a large number and variety of Work Skills Analysis Tools on the Internet by using descriptors that combine the concepts of employment and assessment eg., skills testing, employability skills. Some information is available from the FuturEd research report Reviewing Work Skills Analysis Tools on the Forestry Continuing Studies Network website:

<http://www.cariboo.bc.ca/bcfcnsn/local.html>

2. What type and level of skills do you need to concentrate on – eg., basic employability skills, entry-level occupational skills, occupation-specific skills?

Products and services target different types and levels of skills.

3. What use do you want to make of the tools?

Some tools only profile job skills, useful for creating job descriptions.

Some tools only assess individuals, useful for screening applicants.

Some tools provide a skills gap analysis, useful for targeting training.

4. Are you the consumer targeted by a particular product or service?

Key decision factors will include the size and nature of your industry, the characteristics of your client group, the context you're operating within, and existing studies of your industry.

5. Do you want to purchase a product that you use – eg., a software program – or a service where the job profiling, assessing and/or skills gap analysis is done for you?

There will be a difference in the amount of time and finances you commit to the process if you do it yourself.

6. What human resources and equipment do you bring to the task?

Different tools require different resources – eg., hardware and software – and some tools are very labour intensive and knowledge intensive.

7. How important are time and money to you?

You may be inherently limited by the timeframes and budget that you have.



In the end, you will have to make choices between products and services. To feel you've made the best decision, MAKE AN INFORMED DECISION.

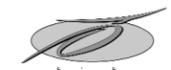
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<http://www.cariboo.bc.ca/bcfcnsn/local.html>



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What to Ask When Choosing Work Skills Analysis Tools



...MAKING AN INFORMED CHOICE

Work skills analysis tools are products and services that help you determine:

- what skills are required in certain jobs,
- what skills individuals have acquired,
- what training to target to fill the gap.

To make an informed choice between work skills analysis tools, you need to ask two sets of questions:

- questions about the products and services, and
- questions about your organization's resources and needs.

QUESTIONS ABOUT WORK SKILLS ANALYSIS TOOLS



Making an informed choice.

YOU ARE –

- a trainer, or
- an education program planner, or
- a human resources specialist.

You have responsibility for the career development of a group of people.

THEY MAY BE –

- personnel of your company, your client or your union.
- unemployed workers.
- pre-employment trainees.

YOU NEED TO DETERMINE –

- what skills they have acquired,
- what skills are required of them,
- what top-up training to provide, and
- what resources and expectations you bring to these processes.

You can find commercial tools that do these things. As a consumer wanting to review and compare them, you need to ask the following questions:

1. What competencies – skills, knowledge and abilities – are assessed by this product or service?

- 1.1. What is the nature of the skills?
 - How are they labeled – eg., basic, employability, personal qualities?
 - Are the skills lists generally recognized as is, for example, HRDC's Job Profiling Essential Skills?
- 1.2. If competencies are job-specific or work-specific, are they?
 - Generic and/or technical?
 - Entry-level and/or advanced?
- 1.3. What levels are assessed?
 - What are the levels of detail – eg., very fine or very broad?
 - What is the basis for the levels – eg., school grade levels?
- 1.4. What is the nature of the assessment?
 - Is it a description or a measurement of skills?
 - Is the assessment based on performance?

2. Who is the producer, provider or supplier?

- 2.1. How do you contact the head office?
- 2.2. What is the organization's history? Does it give you a sense of confidence?
- 2.3. How reliable and credible is the product/service?
 - Is there a body of research or supporting evidence?
 - Can you contact references who have bought and/or used the product/service?
 - Does it come with a guarantee or warranty?
- 2.4. What information and consumer service is available, and how accessible is it?
 - Is there any "local" access in your country or province?
 - Is information easily available?
 - Are demonstration materials available? What are the costs and conditions?

- Do you have a sense of the quality of customer service?
- Is technical support available – eg., 1-800 number?

3. Who is the intended consumer?

- 3.1. Is the product/service aimed at a very narrow or very broad audience – eg., one broad industry like manufacturing, or a particular type of industry like the information technology industry?
- 3.2. What assumptions are made about the target consumer, eg., organizational needs, funding sources?

4. What is the nature of the product or service?

- 4.1. Is it a product you keep, a service to be contracted, or both?
- 4.2. How are you involved in using the product or service?
 - What equipment and facilities are required?
 - What personnel will be involved?
 - What time will be required of your staff?
- 4.3. What are the end results of the process or service?
 - How usable is the final report to you? What is the degree of technicality?
 - Are the results individualized or aggregated?
 - Who owns the information gathered?
 - Are results confidential? What is the nature of the confidentiality?
- 4.4. Are there linkages to existing or needed services such as:
 - Instructional and training plans or materials?
 - Your hiring or recruiting methods?
 - Your existing management information system?
 - Your job classification systems?
 - Industry occupational skill standards?
 - Individual competency profiles or portfolios?

- 4.5. Is the product or service "user-friendly"?
 - What type of terminology is used – eg., generally understood or "unique" to the producer?
 - What amount and type of information is required in advance in order to use the product or service?
- 4.6. Is it flexible and adaptable?
 - Is the format flexible – eg., can it be modified or changed at all?
 - Is it adaptable to various industries or sectors?
 - Can it be adapted to different sizes of organization – eg., small enterprise to multinational firm?

5. Who is the target "individual"?

- 5.1. Is the product or service for a general or a specific population – eg., within a type of industry or with a particular educational level?
- 5.2. Is it accessible to specific populations?
 - What languages is it available in – eg., both French and English?
 - Is it barrier- and bias-free for persons with disabilities, women, visible minorities, and First Nations?
- 5.3. What is the difficulty level?
 - Can it be used by persons for whom English/French is not a first language?
 - Can it be used by persons with low literacy levels?
- 5.4. Does it have appeal or application to different age groups – eg., youth, seniors?

6. What is the nature of the content?

- 6.1. Is it relevant to the Canadian and/or a localized cultural context?

- 6.2. Is it applicable to the Canadian labour market?
- 6.3. Is it "living"?
 - Has it been updated and/or revised?
 - How often?
 - How recently?

7. What is the format(s) of the product or service?

- 7.1. What is the type of product/format for each step – eg., pen and paper, computer software, on-line?
 - Job skills profiling
 - Individual skills assessment
 - Skills gap analysis
- 7.2. What process is followed for each step?
 - Is it individualized or conducted in groups?
 - Is it simple or complex?
 - Is it a self-reported assessment or is it by an outside assessor?
 - Is it multiple choice or other?
 - How is the information verified?
- 7.3. What equipment is needed for each step?
 - What general equipment is needed – eg., computer hardware?
 - What particular equipment or software is needed?

8. Who is involved in doing assessments?

- 8.1. For each step, who is involved and what are the requisite qualifications?
 - Job skills profiling
 - Individual skills assessment
 - Skills gap analysis
- 8.2. What are the requirements of your staff?
 - What is the nature and cost of training provided?
 - What is the time and cost to your organization?

9. What is the total time required?

- 9.1. How much time is required for the completion of each step?
 - How much time for each job profiled?
 - How much time for each person assessed?
 - How much time for the skills gap analysis?
- 9.2. How long is the turn-around time for final results?
- 9.3. What is the total time per person assessed?

10. What is the total cost?

- 10.1. Is there an initial fee and/or annual fees?
- 10.2. Are there licensing fees? Does this apply to multiple and/or single sites or users?
- 10.3. What is the cost for each step?
 - What is the cost per job profiled?
 - What is the cost per individual assessment?
 - What is the cost for the skills gap analysis?
- 10.4. What is the total cost per individual assessed?
- 10.5. Are there economies of scale – eg., reduced cost with increasing numbers?
- 10.6. What are the associated consumer costs – eg., training, administration time, communications?
- 10.7. What are the customization costs?

The purpose of this guide is not to judge products and services for you but to provide a framework of questions to ask. You may choose to rank criteria, eg., placing more emphasis on time or cost. You should ask these questions – and others that you discover to be important to you – not only of the tool providers, but of other consumers as well.

