

# **Sustaining Prior Learning Assessment in British Columbia**

## **Discussion Paper**



**BRITISH  
COLUMBIA**

**Ministry of Advanced Education**



**CENTRE FOR CURRICULUM,  
TRANSFER & TECHNOLOGY**





# **Sustaining Prior Learning Assessment in British Columbia**

## **Discussion Paper**

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# *Sustaining – Nourishing, fostering, nurturing, cultivating, developing, improving, amplifying.*

## OVERVIEW

British Columbia has begun the systemic implementation of Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) throughout the entire public post secondary education (PSE) sector. Over the past eight years, PLA in BC has evolved from an innovative concept being discussed at a few institutions to a significant province-wide initiative that is acknowledged as being the farthest ahead in the country.<sup>1</sup> However, as with all innovations, the momentum has reached a plateau, and it is important to bring new commitment and energy to PLA in order to nurture its growth and utilization. In BC, as in other parts of Canada, there is concern about the sustainability and efficiency of PLA.

The purpose of this discussion paper is to provide a rationale for the recommended actions, stimulate those actions, and ultimately nurture the sustainability of PLA in BC's public institutions of adult and higher education. This paper is based on and supported by a companion research paper.<sup>2</sup>

This paper briefly sets out the following:

- An introduction to PLA.
- An overview of achievements to date.
- Challenges that need to be addressed.
- Recommended actions.

## INTRODUCING PLA

### Terminology

According to the CLFDB, PLA is *a process of identifying, assessing and recognizing what a person knows and can do*, and it is used to increase access to both education/training and employment.<sup>3</sup> It is a concept that has various labels:

- PLA in British Columbia and in a number of jurisdictions and by organizations in the US, including the Council for Adult and Experiential Learning (CAEL).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Prior Learning Assessment in British Columbia*, by Carol Matthews (Learning Specialist Association of B.C. Digest, 1997), available at <http://www.c2t2.ca/PLA/matthews.html> (last visited June 19, 2001).

<sup>2</sup> *Sustainability and Efficiency of PLA in BC's Public PSE system*, by Kathryn Barker (C2T2, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> For more information, see CLFDB's website, currently maintained by Canlearn Interactive, at <http://www.plar.com> (last visited June 19, 2001).

- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) – in most Commonwealth countries, and at Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) in Ottawa.
- Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) – by many provinces in Canada, based on national projects of the Canadian Labour Force Development Board (CLFDB).<sup>5</sup>

In the education environment, PLA is typically used to help people get into the system and acquire formal credentials more efficiently. In the employment environment, it can be used to help people gain employment by demonstrating they have the skills and knowledge in the absence of recognized credentials.

In BC’s public colleges, university colleges, universities, institutes and agency, PLA makes it possible for people to earn credit towards a post secondary credential. Institutions offering PLA services recognize that people learn at work, in their communities, and at home, as well as in classrooms. In BC, the term PLA has specific definitions. A definition, adopted by the BC Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT) in 1994, is *assessment by some valid and reliable means, by a qualified specialist, of what has been learned through non-formal education/training or experience, that is worthy of credit in a course or program offered by the institution providing the credit.*<sup>6</sup>

The Ministry of Advanced Education, on the other hand, has a need to report on the funding and provision of PLA in a consistent way in order to allocate funding to institutions in a fair and consistent manner. Since MAE funding to the PSE system is determined by a negotiated FTE (Full Time Equivalent) student profile, the definition of PLA is limited to that which relates to the generation of “PLA” FTEs. Consequently, MAE’s definition builds on BCCAT’s with the caveat that PLA must *result in the award of credit and shorten program completion time.* As a result, the MAE definition is a narrower definition than that of BCCAT and CLFDB.

Since PSE institutions are autonomous, the way that each institution has adopted MAE’s definition over the past few years is slightly different, as is the way it reports the activity to the Ministry of Advanced Education (MAE) and to the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology (C2T2).

Most recently, within the public PSE sector in BC, many institutions are now seeing PLA as part of a wider set of “flexible assessment” (FA) activities.<sup>7</sup> This term is used to broadly describe all the assessment options available to learners. For example, FA is:

- a process to formally assess student evidence of learning when there is no documentation or confirmation of the outcome of that learning from a recognized educational authority credit producing activities –within both base-funded and non base-funded programs,

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<sup>4</sup> For more information, see CAEL’s website at <http://www.cael.org/Events/PLAWorkshops.htm#What is PLA> (last visited June 19, 2001).

<sup>5</sup> The CLFDB is no longer in operation.

<sup>6</sup> BCCAT Transfer Tips at <http://www.bccat.bc.ca/tips/terms.html#anchor-PL-29518> (last visited June 19, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> *Prior Learning Assessment in British Columbia: 1999/2000 Annual Report* (C2T2, 2000), available at <http://www.c2t2.ca/PLA> (last visited June 19, 2001).

- a process to formally assess student evidence of learning that does not lead to award of credit, e.g., advanced standing, exemptions and placement activities and/or non-articulated transfer requests, and
- the development and maintenance of a process within institutions to advise students regarding their learning options, workplace-based training program reviews, and top-up learning.

## History<sup>8</sup>

While assessment of prior learning has always been a part of good teaching, the formal, systemic implementation of PLA in BC is relatively recent. It began as grass roots initiative, with early innovation coming from a few key individuals and institutions. In 1994, BCCAT provided a definition and in following years assisted in the development of structured PLA implementation standards and guidelines. In 1996, the Ministry of Education, Skills and Training created a vision of a preferred future for PSE in British Columbia that fully incorporated PLA. Also in 1996, the newly formed Centre for Curriculum, Transfer and Technology was mandated to work with post secondary educators and institutions to develop and implement PLA in conjunction with other education reforms. Educators and advocates, who for some years had been exploring and promoting the concept, welcomed the opportunities and resources presented to them and systematically began to implement PLA in BC's public PSE system of colleges, university colleges, universities, institutes and agency with guidance from the BC PLA Steering Committee<sup>9</sup> and the Institutional PLA Coordinators' Working Group (ICWG).

The Ministry of Advanced Education is committed to providing increased access to the education, training and credentials that people need throughout their lives.<sup>10</sup> MAE provides funding to individual institutions and to C2T2 to support the development of the PLA initiative in British Columbia.<sup>11</sup> By providing greater flexibility in the way learning is assessed and credentials are recognized, learners and employers can be served in a more timely manner. All publicly-funded PSE institutions now have policies and procedures either in place or under development that recognize and credit learners' skills and knowledge in at least some program areas; provincial guidelines for PLA are in place; and PLA, both as a concept and a set of tools, has served as a catalyst for the emergence of greater integration of services and more learner-centred practice within the PSE system.

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<sup>8</sup> *Doing the Right Things Right: A 1998 Quality Audit of PLA/PLAR Implementation in BC*, by Kathryn Barker (C2T2, 1998) available at <http://www.c2t2.ca/PLA> (last visited June 21, 2001).

<sup>9</sup> This committee was disbanded in April 2001.

<sup>10</sup> For more information, see *Charting A New Course: A Strategic Plan for the Future of British Columbia's College, Institute and Agency System* (MAE, 1996) available at <http://www.aett.gov.bc.ca/strategic/> (last visited June 19, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Since MAE began providing PLA Enhancement Grant funding in 1998/1999, \$562 400 was awarded to assist program areas in developing strategies to increase delivery of PLA services. Projects included province wide work in Nursing, Adult Basic Education (ABE), Applied Business Technology (ABT) and Visual Arts, Media Arts and Design. Since 1996/1997, MAE has provided \$3 255 000 in PLA Implementation Grants to BC post secondary institutions. Between these two funding initiatives, and not including the funding C2T2 has received to further the BC PLA initiative, MAE has provided institutions \$3.82M for PLA in BC.

## Rationale for PLA

In addition to contributing to broad public policy goals, PLA offers benefits to individual learners, institutional providers and employers.<sup>12</sup>

- PLA enables learners to achieve their educational goals in less time and often at less cost; provides opportunities for career mobility; enhances self-esteem; and encourages sound decision-making about educational and career plans.
- Educational institutions appreciate the opportunity, through PLA, to enhance flexibility, foster higher completion and retention rates, serve increasingly diverse learners, and promote meaningful partnerships with business and industry through PLA.
- For employers, PLA may serve to motivate the workforce to acquire more training; make the best use of limited training dollars; link workplace learning with educational credentials; and enable the establishment of helpful partnerships with educational institutions.
- PLA encourages the broader use of a variety of assessment strategies and the explicit identification and articulation of goals of student learning.

On a broader scale, it is intended that PLA contribute directly to the achievement of six pan-Canadian public policy goals: the efficient use of resources, the development of a lifelong learning culture, the advancement of social justice, co-ordinated and coherent labour force development, education and training reform, and the management of change.<sup>13</sup>

## ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

There is a record of continuous improvement and innovation in PLA services within BC's public PSE system. In 1998, a quality audit of PLA in BC against recommended national quality standards concluded that BC was meeting or exceeding the standards.<sup>14</sup> C2T2's PLA annual reports reflect increasing use and success, and highlights of the most current include the following.<sup>15</sup>

- Twenty-eight public PSE institutions currently offer PLA services, although the extent and type varies.
- Since 1996/1997, more than 7500 learners have accessed PLA services.
- Learner numbers have increased over 147% from 1153 to 2850 since 1996/1997 with a total population served of over 7500 learners.
- PLA has generated more than 1148 FTE student enrolments since 1996/1997.

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<sup>12</sup> For more information, see website page *PLA for ABT – About PLA* (C2T2, 2001) at <http://www.c2t2.ca/PLA/abt/> (last visited June 19, 2001).

<sup>13</sup> For more information, see *Improving Training and Access to Employment Through Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition* (CLFDB, 1996), available at [http://www.plar.com/publications/national\\_implementation\\_strategy/index.html](http://www.plar.com/publications/national_implementation_strategy/index.html) (last visited June 19, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> Available at <http://www.c2t2.ca/PLA> (last visited June 21, 2001).

<sup>15</sup> *Prior Learning Assessment in British Columbia - 1999/2000 Annual Report* (C2T2, 2000), available at <http://www.c2t2.ca/PLA> (last visited June 19, 2001).

- In 1999/2000, approximately 440 programs or courses offered PLA, an increase of more than 205% over the previous four years.
- Over 14 000 people have participated in more than 950 PLA training and development activities since 1996/1997.
- In 1999/2000, over half the PSE institutions participated in projects with external organizations to increase PLA applications. Some particularly successful projects have had a wide impact, e.g., the Licensed Practical Nurse and Resident Care Worker projects of the Health Labour Adjustment Agency; and the program-based learning outcomes of the Applied Business Technology Programs.
- The profile of PLA has been significantly increased throughout the province; and the profile of BC's PLA implementation has been established throughout Canada.

In short, BC's public PSE system continues to increase delivery of PLA, take advantage of institutional development activities and resources, and enhance the provincial infrastructure.

PLA is imbedded in a bundle of reform strategies aimed at transforming the public PSE system in BC. The PSE system is, in limited but significant ways, becoming more focused on the learner, oriented to outcomes, integrated, flexible and innovative. These achievements are due to many factors: grass roots advocacy and collaboration in the education sector; provincial leadership and coordination; dedicated resources, expertise and finances; and an incremental and flexible approach to implementation.

## **CHALLENGES TO ADDRESS**

Despite these achievements, PLA in BC now faces serious challenges to its sustainability and efficiency, as identified by both a review of the literature in the field, and the informed opinions of PLA practitioners in BC.<sup>16</sup>

Among the identified barriers to sustainability<sup>17</sup> are the following:

- There is no common definition or understanding of PLA across the PSE system.
- There is not common acceptance of the PLA process across programs and institutions.
- There is not an infrastructure in each institution that supports PLA on a permanent basis.
- There are not enough trained personnel available to support PLA.
- Potential clients are not typically aware of PLA services and motivated to access them.
- All public PSE institutions are not necessarily willing to accept transfer credit achieved via PLA.

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<sup>16</sup> *Sustainability and Efficiency of PLA in BC's Public PSE system*, by Kathryn Barker (C2T2, 2001).

<sup>17</sup> Sustainability has been operationally defined, by the BC PLA Steering Committee's Research Subcommittee, as ensuring that all public PSE institutions provide PLA services in as many programs and disciplines as possible.

As well, there is an identified need to make PLA more efficient.<sup>18</sup> Leadership and resources are still required in order to:

- understand the actual costs and effects of PLA,
- streamline the assessment and advising process,
- ensure that students are not required to undertake duplicate assessments,
- ensure that assessments and resulting credit are transferable,
- ensure that provincial guidelines for PLA service delivery are consistently practised,
- keep paperwork to a minimum, and
- assist institutions to collaborate in offering PLA services.

At this time, sustainability and efficiency are important but unachieved goals in PSE in BC.

PLA practitioners, specialists, researchers and advocates, in BC and across Canada, have identified the following circumstances that contribute to the challenges with sustainability and efficiency of PLA.

- Inadequate resources – time, finances and trained specialists.
- Negative attitudes of teaching staff and indifference from administration.
- Fundamental philosophical bias against the formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning.
- Simple lack of demand by students that may be related to an inability to demonstrate Return on Investment (ROI), and/or seemingly complex and unnecessary procedures.
- Difficulty with determining actual costs for institutions and individuals.
- Lack of awareness and acceptance among employers and industries.

In order to sustain PLA at BC's PSE institutions, there is a need to resolve the complexities of:

- PLA assessment processes and practices -- resulting from varying operational definitions of the term "PLA assessment," lack of templates for evaluations, and/or the degree of "fit" in practice between PLA and some/all disciplines,
- institutional PLA implementation -- including but not limited to staff workload and remuneration, transcribing and recording of PLA credit (e.g., grades), marketing of PLA within and outside of institutions, performance measurement, links to learning outcomes, student residency requirements for degree completion vis-à-vis PLA, and
- system-wide PLA implementation -- related to, e.g., the overall management of change, ambiguity about support for PLA as a mandated policy, and a perceived gap between policy and practice; lack of ongoing commitment and resources; inadequacy of information sharing and an imbalance in decision-making; the extent of PLA being done under other terminology, e.g., course waiver or pre-requisite waiver; a need for active and visible Management/Administration support for PLA; the concept that PLA may be a "right" that a student can "demand" and be guaranteed.

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<sup>18</sup> Efficiency of PLA has been operationally defined, by the BC PLA Steering Committee's Research Subcommittee, as providing PLA services across the province in such a manner that the learner and the educational institution alike experience the process as timely in its duration and reasonable in its requirements.

While PLA practitioners and PSE administrators have identified and acknowledged these barriers, they have also recommended means of addressing the challenges and continuing the enhancement of PLA services in BC.

## RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The following nine areas identify areas where action could be taken to sustain and enhance PLA in BC's public PSE institutions, starting with those of immediate initiatives and working through to long-term goals. The recommendations in each area are also ordered from immediate to long-term.

### **1. Ensure Quality and Uniformity of PLA Service**

The current PLA Implementation Guidelines for British Columbia, developed by C2T2 in collaboration with the PSE system and endorsed by MAE in 1999, have been interpreted and applied differently between and within institutions as a result of decision-making by autonomous institutions. The result is an inconsistent type and quality of service for learners. Policies and procedures need to be examined, refined and improved on a system-wide basis. There is a need to increase understanding and sharing of good practice, including the creation of models for adoption by others.

At the institutional level, experience<sup>19</sup> has shown that the conditions under which PLA can thrive include, but are not limited to: executive support; knowledgeable and committed coordinators; faculty training and acceptance; combining PLA with institutional research and funding/FTE generation functions in the same office; and successful partnerships with outside agencies.

#### ***Recommendation #1:***

C2T2 should collect and publish information regarding the adoption of the 1999 PLA Implementation Guidelines, including transcribing.

#### ***Recommendation #2:***

PLA and subject area specialists should develop system-wide assessment tools by program area based upon commonly agreed upon program goals or aims.

#### ***Recommendation #3:***

C2T2 and ICWG should collect and disseminate information that will educate the field about options that exist for improving quality of PLA services including examples of good practice at BC institutions.

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<sup>19</sup> For example, at Camosun College.

***Recommendation #4:***

PSE institutions should conduct longitudinal studies on the success of PLA students.

**2. Study and Demonstrate ROI**

A study of the Return on Investment (ROI) of PLA would resolve a number of unanswered questions and barriers associated with sustainability and efficiency of PLA, and it would potentially provide a sound rationale for many of the recommended actions that follow. For example, it is difficult to increase student demand and/or faculty support for PLA when the benefits are not fully understood; and it is difficult to address funding issues when the real costs are not fully set out. Furthermore, it is difficult to convince government of the need to continue to support this activity without a more complete understanding of its value.

Costs and returns vary by stakeholder group, and the analysis of ROI would take at least four perspectives: learners, institutions, funders (i.e., MAE), and employers. The study of ROI would require a research project to:

- create and apply templates for each stakeholder group to tabulate the costs associated with PLA assessment and advising,
- generate and apply templates for potential benefits or “returns” from PLA, and
- conduct an ROI analysis for stakeholders, individually and collectively.

***Recommendation #5:***

C2T2 and MAE should allocate funds to develop and pilot an ROI study for at least one of the stakeholder groups, and allocate additional funds over the next year to conduct a complete ROI analysis of PLA and other related education/training innovations based on the findings of the first study.

**3. Address Workload Issues**

The scope and nature of workload issues specific to PLA needs to be addressed head-on. It is noteworthy that there are many workload issues causing stress for faculty: curriculum changes, greater diversity in students, and public demands for accountability. It has been recommended that PLA workload issues should be embedded in a discussion of the larger issues. This could/should be done in a concerted way, perhaps through a mediation or arbitration-type setting where there is a commitment to change and action. This could be undertaken as a federally funded “demonstration project” for others to learn from as well.

Both sides – management and unions – have innovations to put on the table. For example, it has been suggested that faculty workload should be calculated on the basis of many and varied roles, not just student contact hours, and/or that specific PLA assessment and adviser roles be established as distinct from faculty positions. Discussions about PLA workload need to be undertaken in the context of the changing role of faculty in higher and post secondary education.

***Recommendation #6:***

Government, C2T2 and others should convene a group of interested parties to address the changing role of faculty in institutes of adult and higher education.

***Recommendation #7:***

C2T2, working with the PSE employers and instructor unions, should make application to the HRDC Labour Management Program for funding to address PLA-related workload issues, providing a model for potential application across Canada. This action would have to be taken with full cooperation of unions and management and must respect the language of the common agreement.

**4. Promote Flexible Assessment**

Most instructors understand that FA is simply good practice – allowing learners to demonstrate acquired learning in a variety of ways. Acceptance of PLA will be improved when instructional staff has the training opportunities to see the connections between PLA and FA, and to improve their FA practices. PLA and FA training should be accessible to new, full-time and part-time faculty as well as existing faculty who conduct assessments, focusing particularly on learning outcomes and authentic assessment practices.

***Recommendation #8:***

ICWG and C2T2 should promote and provide academically sound, learner-focused opportunities for professional development at both the system and institution level in the areas of assessment, learning outcomes and PLA and enable PSE providers to share best practices in these areas. These actions should be taken with the aim of ensuring that professional development activities are sustainable at the institution level through such methods as train-the-trainer.

**5. Make Best Use of Funding Mechanisms**

PLA has been instituted in BC's PSE system on a pilot or special project basis with a fixed annual contribution to each institution from the Ministry. After eight years of development, it is time to create a funding mechanism that simultaneously embeds PLA/FA within established teaching/learning practice while promoting system-wide change in how learning is managed.

For example, it has been suggested that students and programs be funded by outcomes rather than inputs. Existing funding models do not provide incentives for sustaining PLA.

More importantly, the current PLA funding process is not well understood by institutions and/or systematically applied.

***Recommendation #9:***

ICWG and C2T2, possibly with a task force including representatives from relevant stakeholders, should review current funding models and innovations for PSE with respect to sustaining PLA and report to MAE regarding possible funding changes.

***Recommendation #10:***

MAE should require a formal commitment to the 1999 PLA Implementation Guidelines, from institutional executives, as a condition of continuing to receive PLA-related funding.

**6. Increase Efficiency**

Whereas the actual costs of PLA are not known, one means of enhancing PLA's sustainability is to improve efficiency where possible. For example, this could be done through:

- group assessments rather than individualized assessments,
- creating standardized, program-based assessment and record-keeping tools for use electronically or face-to-face,
- sharing assessors between institutions or between disciplines,
- consolidating PLA services within, for example, regions of the province or industry sectors,
- focusing PLA activity on those programs with the largest number of learners seeking PLA,
- narrowing the categories of learners eligible for PLA and flexible assessment to those most likely to be successful, and
- employing workplace-based assessment and/or outsourcing of assessment services to professional assessors.

Already the ABT/PLA project offers provincial level assessment and electronically based assessment tools.<sup>20</sup> The Open Learning Agency (OLA) provides PLA services to some programs and institutions; and OLA has regional learning centres that could be further employed in the delivery of PLA on a regional basis. As well, Skills Centres of various types have become the education/training focus of many communities. There are existing models to build on and learn from. However, it requires that institutions present consistent learning outcomes for courses and programs, a process that has just begun in PSE in BC.

***Recommendation #11:***

PLA and assessment specialists as a group should examine the seven actions listed above as means of decreasing costs while maintaining quality and integrity of PLA services to individuals and implement as appropriate.

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<sup>20</sup> This is a MAE-funded and C2T2-managed PLA Enhancement Grant Project aimed at developing online PLA tools for learners wishing credit for skills and knowledge in the area of ABT, particularly for learners participating in the COPE-ABT Core (Collaborative Online Project for E-Learns – Applied Business Technology – Core program).

***Recommendation #12:***

MAE should fund enhancement grants specifically for programs willing to establish common learning outcomes, set up standardized assessment tools and share assessors across the program and implement these based on field advice as to which will be the most effective.

**7. Increase Student Demand**

An obvious means of sustaining PLA is to increase the use of the service. This could, perhaps, be achieved through a public relations campaign extolling the benefits of PLA to learners inside and outside PSE institutions – benefits that can be determined through an ROI study. As well, student-related barriers must be addressed or removed. Many have suggested that, for example, mechanisms must be created to entitle adult learners to student loans for part-time study and PLA. Students themselves have said that there is an urgent need to increase the effectiveness and appeal of PLA. They have asked that costs be rationalized to reflect the services provided, and that PLA be made more systematic, with clear outcomes and criteria. For example, this could/should be done through:

- minimizing the time, costs and paperwork,
- increasing the Return on Investment (ROI),
- increasing the applications of PLA to include a digital record of acquired learning as an outcome of the PLA process, i.e., an Electronic Learning Record that can be updated and used for various purposes,
- assisting students to develop individual education plans, and
- ensuring top-up learning opportunities through gap analyses.

Increasing the utility of PLA for students would contribute to the principle of student-centredness and reflect a genuine concern for learning productivity.

***Recommendation #13:***

PSE institutions – colleges, universities, university colleges, technical institutes and OLA -- should target promotion to learners and businesses in specific areas where there is both demand and capacity for PLA services, e.g., nursing, computers, forestry, tourism.

***Recommendation #14:***

C2T2 and the ICWG should conduct a research study to determine demand for PLA services by potential market segment and by individuals and involve Human Resources Development Canada (PLAR Group) possibly as a funding partner.

***Recommendation #15:***

The provincial and federal governments should review federal and provincial loan and grant structures for learners with respect to online learning and PLA, and make changes if appropriate.

***Recommendation #16:***

MAE should study the potential of the system-wide use of individual learning records that capture formal, non-formal and informal learning, in an online environment.

***Recommendation #17:***

MAE should fund collaborative pilot projects in specific program areas where there is not a lot of PLA activity to stimulate demand/awareness PLA.

**8. Generate Income with PLA**

It is possible to actually generate income by selling PLA services and products to such potential clients as other institutions, businesses of all sizes, and immigrant-serving agencies. This means that those bodies would not have to develop their own systems and would get consistent, high-quality assessments. However, it would require substantial public education around the benefits and processes of PLA for the target groups. It would also require considerable formalization of the field, with credentialed assessors and standardized systems that don't currently exist. In BC, there is marketable PLA expertise.

As well, to realize the full potential of the concept, it is necessary to promote other uses of PLA. The process of identifying, describing, reflecting, validating what a person knows and can do is becoming an essential career management skill and an element of human capital management for the knowledge economy. This presents another business opportunity for PSE providers.

***Recommendation #18:***

PSE providers in BC should develop a joint market strategy, then market PLA services and products to other jurisdictions and businesses.

***Recommendation #19:***

C2T2 should update the PLA Training Modules and put them online.<sup>21</sup>

**9. Continue to Redesign Learning Delivery**

In order for PLA to be fully incorporated into teaching and learning at the PSE level, substantial change must take place. First, all courses and programs must be described in terms of intended learning outcomes, and the specific Knowledge, Skills and Abilities (KSAs) to be acquired by learners. Second, courses must be modularized so that, when a student is able to demonstrate through PLA that s/he needs only part of a course, that part is available to them.

In order for PLA services to be valuable, the ensuing top up training required as a result of the assessment must be available in a flexible manner, on an as needed basis and in module sizes that avoid duplication of learning already undertaken.

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<sup>21</sup> The PLA Training Modules were created in collaboration with the ICWG in 1997 and are currently available for purchase through OLA.

***Recommendation #20:***

MAE and C2T2 should target funding to projects that identify learning outcomes, assessment issues, on-line delivery and PLA as integrated parts of projects.

***Recommendation #21:***

MAE, C2T2 and all partners in PSE provision should develop and implement strategies that encourage institutional change resulting in institutions being more learning centred.

## **CONCLUSION**

In summation, to sustain and enhance PLA in BC, immediate action is required to:

- ensure quality and uniformity of PLA service,
- study and demonstrate Return on Investment (ROI) for PLA,
- address workload issues,
- promote flexible assessment,
- make the best use of funding mechanisms,
- increase efficiency of PLA,
- increase student demand for PLA,
- generate income with PLA, and
- continue the redesign of learning delivery.