



# Great Planning Leads to Great Futures

Navigate Your Post Secondary Studies



*Alberta Recognizes Learning*

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# **ACAT'S Forum on PLAR**

- June 13 & 14, 2006
- 150 registrants
- Stakeholders from across Alberta
  - member post-secondary institutions
  - Alberta Apprenticeship & Industry Training
  - Human Resources & Employment
  - Professional Assoc. & Licensing Bodies
  - Business & Industry





# Background

- Previous workshop for member institutions held in September of 1995
- PLAR Activity stalled in the late 1990's
- May 2005: ACAT sponsored a research project on the “state of PLAR” in Alberta
- 62% of Alberta psi's had policies or guidelines in place for PLAR
- 37% had none
- Only 1-2% of students reported receiving credit through PLAR





# New possibilities...

- 2005- 2006: Advanced Education a high priority for the Alberta Government
  - Creating a learner-centered society and lifelong learning opportunities for all Albertans
  - Searching for more effective solutions to labour market shortages and early high school leavers
  - Needing to create more flexible learning opportunities
- PLAR becomes a key strategy to address these issues





# New possibilities...

- PLAR highlighted in AE's new policy framework, *"A Learning Alberta"*
- PLAR identified as a key mechanism to enhance access in the *Access to the Future Act*
- PLAR is a strategy in a number of cross-ministry initiatives
- PLAR is considered an action within the strategy for "Connecting Learning and Work: A Career Development Strategy for Alberta"





# ACAT Responds

- Based on the government's focus on post-secondary education, and
- Based on the results of the report
  - Council made a decision to hold a forum during which Best Practices would be shared and input from stakeholders would be gathered to set direction for the next few years





# **Objectives & Outcomes from *Alberta Recognizes Learning***

- Raising awareness of PLAR in Alberta
- Identifying and showcasing best practices in Alberta and Canada
- Discussing challenges facing PLAR practitioners
- Identifying opportunities for overcoming these challenges; and
- Providing recommendations to ACAT and the system to use in better practicing PLAR



- Participants heard from key speakers in the field of PLAR from Alberta and across Canada
- Three Alberta post-secondary institutions, a Professional Association, and Alberta Apprenticeship and Industry Training had the opportunity to showcase their best practices in PLAR





# Gathering Input from Participants

Engaged stakeholders in discussion to identify:

- key issues surrounding the implementation of PLAR,
- possible solutions to overcome those barriers, and
- next steps for all stakeholders in working toward those solutions.



# **Analysis of Stakeholder Input Revealed Ten Broad Themes...**



# 1. Definition of “learning”:

- broaden the definition of learning beyond what is more traditionally accepted by post-secondary education providers
- focus more on the successful evidence-based mastery of course- or program-based outcomes exhibited by learners



## **2. Need for an Alberta Policy Framework on PLAR**

Request that the Government of Alberta and the Ministry of Advanced Education develop and adopt a policy framework on PLAR to increase the capacity for the recognition of prior learning throughout the education/employment system.



### **3. A requirement for central and focused leadership to promote PLAR**

Create a governing body of key stakeholders to lead development and implementation of PLAR.



## 4. A funding model responsive to PLAR Practices

Establish a diverse, sustainable and coordinated government-funded model to engage post-secondary institutions, employers, community development agencies and Labour Market Information Centres in ensuring PLAR awareness, implementation, accountability and sustainability.



## 5. Development of universal standards

Develop universal PLAR standards and an assessment framework with input from all stakeholders to ensure consistency and transparency.



## **6. Develop PLAR training for mentors and assessors**

Developing PLAR training to ensure consistent system wide implementation.





## 7. Research and best practices

- Create and make visible, through formal and informal mechanisms, best practices, innovative ideas and research.
- Develop models, templates and tools to create PLAR process with many possible applications.



## 8. Partnerships

Developing strategic and innovative partnerships between key stakeholders (e.g. industry, institutions, communities and special interest groups) to meet the needs of the learners.



## 9. Provincial PLAR Centre

- Establish a provincial PLAR centre such as a council to oversee and provide direction.
- Develop a variety of committees or networks to ensure inclusion and commitment from key stakeholders.



## 10. Informing and Communicating about PLAR

- Develop and implement a comprehensive information and communication plan to advance PLAR, market PLAR, make it a household term
- Educate and share PLAR definitions and best practices in order to develop a common understanding.



# **Recommended Actions For ACAT**



# Short-Term Actions

- ACAT will recommend to Advanced Education that the province develop a comprehensive provincial PLAR policy framework
- ACAT will facilitate the creation of a steering or advisory committee to act on the strategic directions emerging from the PLAR Forum



# Short-Term Actions

- ACAT will encourage research initiatives and results will be made available to those requiring such information
- ACAT will include on its website, in the database and Transfer Guide, all the institutions that are currently engaging in PLAR activities so that this information is available to all students



# Short-Term Actions

- ACAT's website will also include portals and links to existing PLAR research, resources, and helpful sites
- ACAT will encourage the creation of mentorships between PLAR proficient post-secondary institutions/organizations and those wanting to begin or expand their PLAR capacity





# Short-Term Actions

- With stakeholders, ACAT will facilitate workshops and future forums for institutional staff and PLAR assessors, professional organizations and others interested in sharing best practices, and developing common terminology



# Short-Term Actions

- ACAT will recommend that pilot projects be funded and implemented, particularly in those high priority occupational areas where labour shortages have been identified



# Short-Term Actions

- ACAT will assist member institutions in connecting to already-existing well-researched theory and best practices created through associations like CAPLA and in institutions such as Athabasca University and Red River College



# Long-Term Actions

- Existing literature and research on PLAR be compiled and available via website
- Creation of a provincial PLAR body to set the strategic direction for PLAR in Alberta and to keep track of materials, research and resources.



# Long-Term Actions

- As part of the PLAR policy framework, ACAT will encourage Advanced Education to re-evaluate the funding models for post-secondary institutions and students receiving PLAR credit.



# Questions?