

# **PLAR Processes for Human Resource Professionals at Manitoba Hydro — Five Years Later**

**Final Report  
July 2007**

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## Acknowledgements

The opportunity to design and pioneer a new workplace model is an exciting and valuable learning experience for all involved. Success is achieved by the collective effort and commitment to serve the needs of those impacted by the resulting change.

My sincere thanks to Sandi Howell, Essential Skills and PLAR Coordinator, Industry Training Partnerships and member of the Workplace Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (WPLAR) Committee for her leadership and vision for creating new, innovative workplace solutions in response to industry needs.

I want to thank my partners on the PLAR Advisory Panel at Manitoba Hydro, Harold Falk, Manager Employee Learning and Development, and MaryAnn Kempe, Manager Employee Services. Working together over the five year period has proved the value of thinking together to achieve results, and the importance of flexibility and creativity as we responded to each new project phase.

In addition to members of the Manitoba Hydro HR management team, it is important to recognize the many managers and supervisors who supported the PLAR participants during the implementation phase.

Thank you to the Dr. Jerry Gray (former Dean) Asper School of Business and Maureen McDonald, Director, Extended Education Division and members of the Asper School of Business faculty who participated in the needs assessment phase. Your partnership at key project phases led to the development of relevant and focused learning opportunities for the PLAR participants.

On behalf of everyone involved in the Manitoba Hydro PLAR process, congratulations to the Manitoba Hydro employees who pursued the Prior Learning, Assessment and Recognition process. It has been a privilege to participate in your learning journey. We recognize your hard work and commitment to achieve the Manitoba Hydro PLAR Internal Standard and your commitment to life-long learning.

*Rosalie E. Olson  
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July 2007*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In January 2003, Workplace Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (WPLAR) Committee approved the launch of the Manitoba Hydro Prior Learning, Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) project for Human Resource Professionals to address a succession planning need. WPLAR contracted Rosalie Olson of Dynamic Resource Management of Winnipeg, Manitoba as the project consultant. Through the WPLAR Committee, expertise and cost-shared assistance is potentially available to support the implementation of PLAR activities in the workplace. WPLAR project funding may be shared with industry, business, labour, accrediting bodies and government.

This report provides an overview of the project objectives and outcomes, by key phase, and understanding of the process for customization of PLAR as a workplace tool to improve individual and organizational performance. In addition, "*PLAR Processes for Human Resource Professionals at Manitoba Hydro—Five Years Later*" provides an important framework for discussion for future partners and stakeholders considering PLAR to address a range of workplace goals. It offers insights into critical success factors, lessons learned and recommendations that will serve to inform leaders on how to integrate these results to develop new workplace PLAR models.

The objectives of Manitoba Hydro PLAR project were to:

- define the knowledge and skill requirements for Manitoba Hydro HR Advisors;
- identify employees within the Human Resource Department who did not meet the formal education requirements for the HR Advisor role and provide these employees with the opportunity to participate in the PLAR process as a means of meeting the competency requirements;
- develop an effective assessment and implementation process (e.g., new workplace PLAR model);
- conduct PLAR assessments for purposes of developing targeted employee development plans;
- support and counsel employees in the development of their portfolio and implementation of their Assessment Development Plan (ADP);
- evaluate project results against objectives to understand employee and organizational impact;

- document critical success factors and lessons learned to benefit future workplace PLAR Applications.
- Ultimately, support Manitoba Hydro's succession planning by increasing the pool of qualified HR employees available to meet immediate and future senior level or supervisory position vacancies resulting from retirement.

In meeting the project objectives, the following outcomes have been achieved:

- Formally recognized employees' prior learning from life and work experiences by granting credit for demonstrated knowledge and/or skills required under PLAR Internal Standard.
- Demonstrated effective use of PLAR principles to ensure a rigorous, fair and consistent assessment process.
- Reinforced the HR managers and HR Advisors need to think strategically through integrating PLAR and resulting PLAR projects into a new HR strategic business model.
- Identified employees with the Manitoba HR family with a high priority and high likelihood of assuming increased responsibilities with the company's succession plan.
- Development of the Manitoba Hydro HR Advisor Internal Standard. This competency standard is based on evaluation of the learning outcomes of the University of Manitoba Bachelor of Commerce four-year degree program (Human Resource Major) and current HR practice and trends with human resources professional field.
- Development of a comprehensive PLAR guide and supporting tools to direct employees in the development of their Learning Inventory.
- Development of an employee development model that focused learning on acquisition of skills relevant to the current and future expectations for the HR Advisor role.
- Reinforced the importance of lifelong learning and relevancy within learning. This was achieved through better coordination of development opportunities with the HR Department and design of new strategic projects to address PLAR participant's skill requirements.
- Improvements to a range of HR tools and practices based on results from completed PLAR projects.

<sup>1</sup> Learning Inventory - The Manitoba Hydro PLAR model utilized a portfolio as a method for employees to their document learning based on the PLAR criteria. The portfolio was referred to the PLAR "Learning Inventory".

- The Manitoba Hydro PLAR project for HR Advisors was recognized for excellence in workplace PLAR application and workforce development with the nomination and successful awarding of the Manitoba Prior Learning Assessment Network (MPLAN) 2007 Pearl Award.

The Manitoba Hydro PLAR project, at the time of writing this report, is in its fifth year and last stage of implementation with December 31, 2007 at the final date for HR employees to submit their Learning Inventory<sup>1</sup> for assessment. As of June 2007, ten HR PLAR participants have successfully met the PLAR Internal Standard and a group of similar size will complete their Assessment Development Plan (ADP) requirements by December 31, 2007. Upon completion of the ADP requirements, employees are qualified to compete for HR positions with a degree education requirement.

In summary, the Manitoba Hydro PLAR project for HR Advisors demonstrates a learner-focused approach to address the company's succession planning need. The investment made in the PLAR assessment and implementation model could be transferable in part or in whole to other key roles within Manitoba Hydro. Prior Learning, Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) is a flexible tool that can be customized to address a range of workplace needs.

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# ***PLAR Processes for Human Resource Professionals at Manitoba Hydro — Five Years Later***

***Report by: Rosalie Olson, Dynamic Resource Management  
July 2007***

## **Project Objectives**

The main purpose of the project, which was structured into four phases, was to provide Manitoba Hydro with support and expertise in the design and implementation of a PLAR process to address immediate and future succession planning needs within their Human Resource employee group. In their succession planning process, Manitoba Hydro HR leadership sought to clearly define new minimum knowledge and skill requirements for employees in the HR Advisor position, a key advisory role across the HR functions.

The new minimum standard needed to consider developments with the larger HR community as well as changes to the nationally recognized Certified Human Resource Professional (CHRP) which was officially released in April of 2003. These changes resulted in a both a National Knowledge Exam and a National Professional Practice Exam for qualified applicants. An industry trend toward higher levels of minimum education, specifically a university undergraduate degree, for key HR positions was tabled. In addition, a degree requirement for the HR Advisor role brought a level of consistency relative to other professional requirements at Manitoba Hydro.

A key factor contributing to exploring PLAR at Manitoba Hydro was the identification of a group of HR employees, with long years of service but without a university degree, who needed to be considered as part of the pool of qualified candidates for future senior HR positions. Given that these employees did not meet the degree requirement and it was not necessarily realistic for them to pursue a three or four year degree program, PLAR was identified as a viable mechanism to offer employees as an alternate method to be assessed as qualified to compete for future HR positions as they became available.

The objectives of this project were to:

- define the knowledge and skill requirements for Manitoba Hydro HR Advisors;
- identify employees within the Human Resource Department who did not meet the formal education requirements for the HR Advisor role and provide these employees the opportunity to participate in the PLAR process as a means of meeting the competency requirements;
- develop an effective assessment and implementation process (e.g., new workplace PLAR model);
- conduct employee PLAR assessments for purposes of developing targeted employee development plans;

- produce a guide to support employees' development of a portfolio or Learning Inventory to document their learning in comparison to the defined competency standard;
- support and counsel employees in the development of their portfolio and implementation of their Assessment Development Plan (ADP);
- evaluate project results against objectives to understand employee and organizational impact;
- document critical success factors and lessons learned to benefit future workplace PLAR Applications.
- Ultimately, support Manitoba Hydro's succession planning by increasing the pool of qualified HR employees available to meet immediate and future senior level or supervisory position vacancies resulting from retirement.

## **The Value of Workplace PLAR**

Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) must be understood within a workplace context and as a tool that can be customized and adapted to address a range of workplace needs. Simply stated, workplace PLAR is a process to make clear what employees must know and be able to do and to formally recognize the knowledge and skills employees bring from work, life experiences and prior formal learning. The process involves identifying and defining the required job competencies followed by the assessment of the employee's learning in comparison to the job competencies or performance standard. This leads to identifying knowledge and/or skill gaps to be addressed through targeted training or learning response. In addition, employees receive recognition for prior learning that might not otherwise be given without the use of PLAR.

In this context, PLAR can assist employers to design and implement targeted training responses; recruit, develop and retain their workforce and systematically define, document and verify required knowledge and skills. From the employees' perspective, employees benefit from clearly understanding the competencies requirements within their job, and from the identification of the most appropriate course of action to address any knowledge and/or skill gaps. The individual benefits can be significant as PLAR can be used towards internal and external education requirements and/or professional certification, and new career path opportunities based on demonstrated, verified knowledge, skills and abilities.

In the workplace context, PLAR results are optimized through linking the PLAR objectives to key strategic organizational goal(s). This approach dictates that multiple stakeholders are informed and engaged in the various project phases and play an integral part in ensuring that the PLAR process stays focused on the intended goals. Given the importance of linking PLAR to key business strategic goals, it is also important that PLAR be assessed using an active change management strategy. This facilitates identification and monitoring of other factors, including how the PLAR process will be impacted by the organization's culture and employees' readiness to adapt to change.

PLAR must also be understood as a “tool” that is customized to meet the unique employee and organizational culture, needs and goals. The customization process helps to ensure the project scope is feasible for the size of the employee group impacted by the organizational goal. In addition, a preliminary assessment of the scope of the workplace need is important in order to identify the resources that will be required to design an appropriate assessment and implementation model.

## **Overview of Manitoba Hydro PLAR Model**

### ***Phase I: Preliminary Research and Needs Assessment***

The first phase of the project involved research and analysis completed over a one-month period for purposes of deciding how to effectively design and implement the PLAR process. The project consultant conducted face-to-face and telephone interviews with members of HR management team and potential PLAR candidates to understand details of the succession planning need, and to identify factors that may impact the model design, including understanding perceptions about PLAR from multi-stakeholder perspectives.

Additional research focused review of PLAR practice in Canada; confirmation of the suitability of PLAR to address the succession planning need; confirmation of the rationale for choosing the University of Manitoba Bachelor of Commerce four year degree program as the underlying benchmark to design the PLAR standard; determination of how to customize PLAR to fit the HR Advisor role, understanding the proposed changes to the Certified Human Resource Professional (CHRP) designation; and collectively how these factors could impact the design and implementation process.

### ***Phase I: Recommendations***

The Phase I: Needs Assessment recommendations were as follows:

- The PLAR model was required to address a short-term time frame (e.g., projected retirements between 2003 and 2008).
- To ensure PLAR was viewed as a credible process, the PLAR process should be embedded within an HR leadership model based on an increased strategic role for HR Advisors. The project consultant presented a draft leadership model to the HR management team for consideration.
- The University of Manitoba Bachelor of Commerce four year degree, HR Major was confirmed an appropriate education program on which to base the PLAR model; ten courses were identified for evaluation with respect to the knowledge and skills outcomes.

- Developments with the national CHRP certification program should be monitored throughout the PLAR implementation process and as appropriate aligned with the corporate competency requirements.
- Managers, employees and potential PLAR candidates should be educated as to the objectives of PLAR, including personal and corporate benefits and the proposed plan for assessment and implementation. PLAR information sessions should be designed and conducted under Phase II: Design and Development.
- To address employees concerns, as identified during the needs assessment, and develop consistent understanding of the PLAR, communications about PLAR in this application should consistently identify PLAR as the “Internal Standard” and not an equivalent to the Bachelor of Commerce. In addition, any communications about PLAR should reinforce that PLAR is an assessment of learning in comparison to the “Internal Standard” and not an evaluation of employee performance.

### ***Phase II: Design and Development - the PLAR Internal Standard and Supporting Tools***

The second phase of the project focused on the design of the PLAR Internal Standard and supporting guide and tools. It involved:

- critical analysis of ten courses within the Bachelor of Commerce four year degree program with an HR major to identify key knowledge and skills outcomes.
- design of the internal PLAR standard;
- design of the guide to inform PLAR candidates how to use a step-by-step process to document and organize their evidence for credit under the PLAR process;
- design of the assessment process to ensure consistent evaluation and documentation of PLAR outcomes.
- establishment of the three member PLAR Advisor Panel.

### ***Phase II: Outcomes***

The second phase of the project involved another level of needs assessment and resulted in the following outcomes:

- A two-part guide was developed to inform employees on how to develop their Learning Inventory. Part I included information on the purpose of PLAR, key PLAR principles and assessment criteria, benefits to employees and Manitoba Hydro, step-by-step instructions

describing how to apply for the PLAR process, and information on what employees could expect from the assessment process. Part II included self-assessment documents based on the minimum knowledge and skills competency statements.

- The PLAR internal standard was designed based on critical evaluation of the learning outcomes for key courses under University of Manitoba Bachelor of Commerce four year degree program with an HR major. In consultation with the Dean of the Asper School of Management, permission was granted to interview professors involved in teaching the courses under consideration.
- The PLAR Internal Standard was organized into 10 knowledge areas and 15 skills areas.
- A 3 point-scale was used for the knowledge areas where level 2 = employee met the knowledge requirement and level 3 = employee exceeded the minimum standard.
- A 5-point scale was used for skill areas where 4 = employee met the skill requirement and level 5 = employee exceeded the minimum standard.
- An assessment process was designed. Part I involved the review of the employee's Learning Inventory in comparison to the Internal Standard. Part II involved a one hour face-to-face interview with the PLAR Advisory Panel.
- The three person PLAR Advisory Panel was established. The Panel included the Manager of Training, the Manager of Employee Services and the project consultant as the external advisor. The Advisory Panel has continued to have oversight of the PLAR project over the five year project period.
- Two information sessions were held to educate managers, employees and potential PLAR candidates, which included presentation of the Internal Standard requirements so employees could see what knowledge and skills were to be assessed. Over fifty employees attended the sessions.
- The initial procedures and protocols for submitting PLAR applications, including the initial due date for PLAR submissions and how PLAR data, including the employees' Learning Inventories, would be stored and accessed were established.

### ***Phase III: PLAR Assessment***

The third phase of the project involved the assessment of the employees' Learning Inventory by the PLAR Advisory Panel and summarizing the resulting development plan in a document referred to as the Assessment Development Plan (ADP). Employees were required to submit the Learning Inventory on a specific due date which triggered the launch of the PLAR assessment process. Phase III resulted in increased understanding of the need to develop new, innovative learning responses to address employee development needs in order to stay true to the focus of relevant and meaningful learning.

### ***Phase III: Outcomes***

The Phase III Assessment phase produced the following outcomes:

- The PLAR Advisory Panel initially received 38 PLAR applications on March 23, 2003. This number was significantly higher than expected. A due date of October 31, 2003 was set as the date in which employees were required to submit their Learning Inventory, providing approximately seven months for employees to gather and organize their evidence to receive credit for the defined knowledge and skills areas.
- The first Learning Inventories were received for assessment on June 13, 2003; an additional 17 Learning Inventories were received on October 31, 2003; one Learning Inventory was received in December 2003, resulting in 21 submissions in the first year.
- The PLAR Advisory Panel received a number of requests for extensions and each request was evaluated on a case-by-case basis. In all circumstances extensions were granted but the time-frame of the extensions varied based on the employee's circumstance and needs.
- The PLAR Advisory Panel received 12 voluntary withdrawals at various points up to January 2004. The reasons for the withdrawal from the process varied. In some cases it related to health issues but the main reasons were tied to employees not seeing the PLAR process meeting their needs given their plans to retire with a short time-frame or, employees concluded they did not plan to apply for future senior leadership positions as they became available. These voluntary withdrawals were not viewed as negative given the project goal to identify those employees who wish to be considered candidates within the corporate succession plan.
- The PLAR interview process was piloted in June 2003 and assessed as being an effective and a necessary part of the assessment process. In the one hour interview, employees were required to do a ten minute presentation. The purpose was to give employees an opportunity to highlight key features of the Learning Inventory, speak to their learning history as well as demonstrate their oral communication skills which was a critical skill area within the Internal Standard.
- Administratively, the assessment process was structured by blocking 2 to 3 three interviews per day based on the availability of Panel members. The Panel members met one hour in-advance of the first interview to discuss and agree on the focus of each interview, conducted one hour interviews with each PLAR candidate, followed by approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour to discuss and agree on the assessment outcomes. Following these meetings, the project consultant prepared the written Assessment Development Plans which were sent to members of the PLAR panel for final review before being sent to the employees.

## ***Phase IV: Implementation - Assessment and Development Plans***

The fourth phase of the project involved the implementation of the employee's Assessment Development Plan, including review of additional evidence submitted for credit based on completed work assignments or courses identified in the employee's development plan. The PLAR Advisory Panel was committed to ensuring the work assignments and recommended courses were as relevant as possible and aligned with the current as well as future job expectations for the HR Advisor role. This decision-making process led to a range of creative learning response as detailed within the Phase IV: Outcomes section of this report.

## ***Phase IV: Outcomes***

The Phase IV outcomes demonstrate a commitment to design employee development plans that resulted in high-value and meaningful learning opportunities. The development plans included a range of learning methodologies to address the knowledge and skill development requirements, including: formal university level courses, new internal course offerings in partnership with the University of Manitoba, self-study, action learning through research assignments, job rotation, computer-based training, structured mentored strategic projects with an HR manager assigned as a project sponsor, and approved volunteer experiences that focused on acquiring the critical skills identified in the employee's assessment plan. The following summarizes the Phase IV outcomes.

- Developed a cost-effective HR Advisor four-year development plan to address knowledge and/or skill requirements defined within the PLAR Internal Standard. Cost-efficiencies were realized in that prior to implementation of the PLAR process, employees may have selected and were reimbursed for successful completion of courses that were not necessarily tied to the job requirements for their job. Under PLAR employees had increased understanding of how completion of specific courses related to the immediate and future success in the HR Advisor role.
- Reinforced the HR Advisors need to think and respond strategically as “business partners” through aligning PLAR development objectives within a new HR leadership model. This resulted in shifts in thinking that aligned with current thinking around HR practice as well as trends with the HR field as evidenced in the newly designed CHRP professional designation.
- Developed a range of tools and templates to document and manage the PLAR assessment process. This included development of a master PLAR spreadsheet to inform the HR managers of the status of all PLAR applications, assessments outcomes and resulting PLAR projects. PLAR updates and planning became a regular agenda item on the HR manager's monthly meeting.
- Developed a one-on-one counseling process to support employees in the development of their Learning Inventory. This process helped to educate employees on how to organize their evidence with reinforcement on how the PLAR criteria should be used to identify and document

strong evidence. In addition, the counseling process created an opportunity to address any misconceptions about the PLAR process. For example, in some cases employees submitted a new piece of evidence for each skill area; however, the counseling process provided insight on how stronger PLAR evidence involved identifying one or two key work assignments and assessing how key skills were demonstrated within that learning context.

- Led to the decision to partner with the University of Manitoba to offer an “internal offering” of three courses that were identified as critical to the knowledge and skill development of the employees in PLAR. These courses were not accessible for students not formally registered in the degree and/or Certificate in Management program. This provided PLAR candidates with a very unique learning opportunity as the course were instructed by professors from the University of Manitoba and included a fourth year level course in Strategic Management and Planning.
- Identification of a consistent knowledge gap for many of the PLAR candidates relating to the ability to identify and critically assess models and theoretical frameworks for purposes of integrating this knowledge into current HR practice. This knowledge is typically gained through formal university-level study which many of the PLAR candidates did not have. This need identification led to ADP recommendations to take a specific university level course and/or the design of self-study assignments based on the textbooks used at the university level.
- Resulted in the development of new PLAR projects through consultation with the HR management team on how these projects could support other strategic objectives within the organization.

These projects, which were assigned to and led by a PLAR participant, included: design and implementation of a HR audit process to assess business units understanding and application of HR policy and practice; analysis of an assessment instrument used in the recruitment process to ensure it was not biased toward any population group and was current with effective industry practice; analysis of change models and theory directed at developing recommendations to optimize the future relocation of employees to a new Manitoba Hydro building in downtown Winnipeg, and leading an assessment of business units understanding of collective agreements. These and other PLAR projects provided employees with exposure to new areas of the HR functions and upon successful completion, the ability to meet outstanding skill requirements through one larger scale learning assignment.

- Resulted in the development of a policy in July 2007 to direct the future use of PLAR for the HR Advisor role beyond December 31, 2007.

## **Lessons Learned – Designing and Implementing Workplace PLAR**

The design and piloting of a new workplace PLAR model demands continual critical analysis of outcomes against project goals and the ability to adapt at each project phase in response to this evaluation. Adaptations included the design of new tools, processes and employee development responses that could not be anticipated at the project on-set. For example, the Phase IV PLAR projects were developed in response to individual PLAR assessment outcomes and led to discussions around how to best address these skills development needs and other HR objectives and do so as efficiently as possible.

In designing and implementing any new workplace model, communication with stakeholders needs to be recognized as a critical success factor and project priority. A range of activities were undertaken at the launch of the project to help managers and employees understand the PLAR objectives, process and benefits. As the project progressed, the PLAR Advisory Panel responded to a range of employee questions. These questions were documented and shared through the company's HR computer server. The HR compute site provided a mechanism to share information learned from each Learning Inventory assessment with the aim to help other employees in various stages of PLAR implementation. To keep the HR managers updated on PLAR activities, PLAR became a regular agenda item at the HR meetings. This also ensured the HR managers could keep the company's Executive informed about the project.

The multiple PLAR projects and various stages of PLAR completion dates resulted in an administrative intensive process and resulted in the need to design a master tracking system that could easily update the HR managers of the status of all employees within the PLAR process.

The assessment process reinforced the importance of applying the PLAR principles and PLAR assessment criteria to ensure consistency in assessing the evidence and developing plans to address knowledge and/or skills gaps. This reality was significant as the assessment period took place over several years and required a systematic process to review the Learning Inventories and subsequent PLAR evidence submissions in a consistent manner.

Based on the Phase I needs assessment results, it was identified early on that employees had differing viewpoints and expectations about PLAR, the assessment process and the value of PLAR to their professional development. It was identified that many employees were concerned that PLAR was an evaluation of individual job performance. Therefore, it was necessary and important for the PLAR Advisory Panel to reinforce throughout the process that PLAR was not an evaluation of individual job performance but an assessment of knowledge and skills in relation to the Internal PLAR standard. To further address the concern, the external project consultant, who had no prior knowledge of employees' performance record, conducted the preliminary Learning Inventory assessment prior to the Panel meetings. In addition, an open, transparent communication process was stressed whereby employees could contact any member of the PLAR panel with questions, concerns or requests for support at any time.

To further understand employees' perceptions and experiences upon successful completion of the PLAR process, the project consultant conducted face-to-face interviews with a sample of employees who had successfully completed the PLAR process. All participants concluded that were pleased they

pursued the PLAR process, and acknowledged that PLAR created new and valuable learning opportunities including exposure to other HR functions. Their responses provided insight into how their opinions about PLAR changed as the process unfolded, shifting from skepticism to eventual recognition that this process was of personal and professional value as well as corporate benefit.

The key concerns expressed during the project evaluation related to the perceived subjectivity in the assessment process and belief that employee with over twenty years of experience should automatically meet all the knowledge and skill requirements which was not the case. Some participants in the evaluation process recommended the PLAR Advisory Panel should not include any manager who PLAR participants report to due to the perception that candidates “not known” to that manager would be at a disadvantage in the PLAR process. This concern reinforces the importance of involving a third party representative on the PLAR assessment team and the need to continually reinforce and educate employees about the criteria used for assessment of learning.

A significant outcome from the evaluation process was the recognition that a project of this magnitude requires an active change management strategy to help identify and monitor other impacts arising from the PLAR project. This upfront analysis would have help to understand more about the company’s culture, employees’ readiness to embrace the project and potential resistance. This understanding would become a valuable input into the on-going project planning and implementation activities.

## **Implications and Recommendations for Future PLAR Models**

The following are the key recommendations that flow from the evaluation of the project outcomes. They are aimed at helping organizations that are considering designing or adapting a workplace PLAR model to anticipate critical factors and therefore, maximize PLAR success.

- ◆ A plan for communication with stakeholders should be formalized and especially for longer-term projects, evaluated at key intervals and adjusted to ensure changing stakeholder needs are addressed. In multi-year projects, stakeholder communication levels should be maintained although frequency adjusted as appropriate. Managers and employees benefit from being updated about project outcomes, success stories and lessons learned.
- ◆ Regular communications should reinforce the criteria used for assessment. This facilitates employees’ understanding of how to develop their evidence. Under this PLAR model, strong evidence for demonstration of learning was defined as verifiable, relevant, current, high quality, transferable, and authentic.
- ◆ An advisory panel involving more than one person should include an external third-party member to reinforce the importance of objective assessment and to respond to perceptions about evaluation of job performance. In the Manitoba Hydro PLAR model, a three person Advisory Panel proved to be a very successful decision-making structure.

- ◆ Project planning should include a system to hold, and manage data collected throughout the PLAR process. To improve data management, instead of allowing employees to identify their own dates for submission of additional evidence toward PLAR credit, fixed dates should be set that apply to all candidates (e.g., first day of each quarter).
- ◆ Information sessions should be designed specifically for managers and supervisors impacted by the PLAR process to educate them on how evidence will be assessed, their role and responsibilities in meeting requests for verification of learning, and their potential role as a sponsor/advisor to employees assigned work projects under their development plan.
- ◆ Workplace PLAR involves a customized approach to designing tools, processes and systems to manage the process. Employees and/or external service providers should have demonstrated expertise in the design of customized workplace solutions. The process should include a review of a workplace PLAR models to identify transferable and/or adaptable good practice.
- ◆ Budget planning should include consideration as to the value of tracking total “in-kind contributions” to further understand the projects costs. In this PLAR application, the time contributed by the two managers at Manitoba Hydro acting as PLAR Advisors was not tracked.
- ◆ The design and implementation of an evaluation process, at key intervals, should be included in the project budget. It was clear employees’ and managers’ perceptions about PLAR changed as well as the nature of the questions and concerns at each phase. It is important to gather this feedback as a valuable input into decision-making for each project phase.
- ◆ In the Manitoba Hydro HR Advisor PLAR model, project goals were directly linked to the achievement of specific strategic objectives. Given the potential for PLAR to impact different organizational levels, it is important that PLAR be assessed using an active change management strategy. An active change management helps to identify and monitor other factors, such as how the PLAR process will be impacted by the organization’s culture, employees’ readiness to adapt to change, and the level of support required by various internal stakeholders. This additional analysis may lead to additional actions to ensure the PLAR objectives are met.

## Looking Forward – PLAR within MB Hydro in the Future

As of June 2007, ten HR PLAR participants have successfully met the PLAR Internal Standard and a group of similar size will complete their Assessment Development Plan requirements by December 31, 2007. Upon completion of the ADP requirements, employees are considered qualified to compete for HR positions with degree requirements within the succession plan. The completion of Phase IV required consideration as to how the PLAR assessment process will be used going forward for the HR advisor role, resulting in a new HR policy that aligns with future professional requirements under the CHRP designation.

In addition to the Canadian Council of Human Associations (CCHRA) new professional standards implemented in April 2003, CCHRA has also approved that effective 2011 CHRP candidates must attain a university degree or applied three year degree in order to be eligible to write the Professional Practice Exam and thereby, attain CHRP status. Manitoba Hydro will take steps to transition to the 2011 CHRP requirements. For the period up to 2011, a qualification matrix has been established by HR Advisor level including a combination of four year Bachelor of Commerce degree (HR Major) and specified years of experience OR, achievement of the Manitoba Hydro HR Advisor Internal Standard and appropriated related years of experience as defined by HR Advisor level. As the three year degree CHRP requirement is considered a flexible career development option no further applications for participation in the PLAR process will be accepted beyond December 31, 2007. Manitoba Hydro will therefore use the same education requirements as established by CCHRA.

In summary, under the Manitoba Hydro PLAR project, a customized PLAR model was developed as part of solution to address succession planning needs over a five year planning period. In addition, the PLAR assessment process responded to the trends within HR practice toward increase education and licensing requirements as led by the Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations. The Manitoba Hydro PLAR model helped to set clear expectations for the academic and skill development path for HR Advisors, led to formal recognition for employees who met the Internal Standard, provided employees with new, valuable learning opportunities and created the opportunity for PLAR participants to participate in job competitions requiring the higher minimum education requirements.

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