



# **Trades Talent Link: Increasing Newcomer Access to Good Jobs in the Skilled Trades**

## ***Promising Practices and Recommendations***

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A Service Delivery Improvement Project

*Building healthy  
communities*

**YMCA-YWCA of the National Capital Region**



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## Executive Summary

### **Are there good jobs in the trades? If so, why aren't more newcomers working in those jobs?**

The YMCA-YWCA of the National Capital Region (Y NCR) Trades Talent Link's (TTL) objective was to help increase clients' participation in the skilled trades labour market by improving the understanding of systemic barriers to positive labour market attachment for newcomers and bridging gaps between newcomers, employers, trades regulators, educators and service providers with the ultimate outcome of increasing newcomer participation in the skilled trades.

Funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) Service Delivery Improvement stream, Trades Talent Link's research focused on examining innovative service design and delivery. Our findings may provide a better understanding of forward-thinking approaches to programming that create opportunities for employers experiencing a shortage of skilled labour to better incorporate newcomers' skills, experience and value into the skilled trades workplaces.

By incorporating the employer and client perception, expectation and motivation surrounding labour market gaps, Trades Talent Link has identified promising practices and recommendations to address the gap between newcomer job-seekers and Ottawa skilled trades employers experiencing well-documented labour shortages. The innovative, promising practices identified by Trades Talent Link can be shared and adapted to narrow the gap between newcomers and favourable labour market attachment outcomes across the settlement services sector.

This report gathers new and updated information on newcomer employment integration in the skilled trades in the National Capital Region.

The recommendations made are based on Trades Talent Link's findings after evaluating all sources of data collected and evolve from the interpretation of lessons learned through the data. Recommendations were organized to reflect client need around economic integration, skills and qualifications and language acquisition to secure employment in the skilled trades

The following information was collected and analyzed for this project:

- a review of the literature on regional and national skilled trades labour market needs and newcomer settlement and integration experiences in Canada;

- Results of focus groups conducted with YMCA-YWCA clients participating in trades-focused career development program;
- Results of 2 employer surveys, Survey 1 was completed in 2019 with 253 respondents, and Survey 2 was conducted in 2021 with 226 respondents
- Observation of 1200 clients and their change in perception following information sessions that present information on opportunities in the skilled trades
- Implementation evaluation of a mentorship program focused on job retention and 15 matched mentors/mentees who had participated in similar Y NCR programming
- Feedback provided by employers who informed the content of employer coaching sessions and participated in workshops intended to increase understanding of the barriers newcomers face in securing employment in the skilled trades

## Recommendations:

|                    | NEWCOMERS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | EMPLOYERS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | SETTLEMENT<br>SERVICE<br>PROVIDERS,<br>REGULATORS AND<br>EDUCATORS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>INTEGRATION</b> | <p>Coordinate settlement and employment services for better information sharing, ensuring "no wrong door" for newcomers. Create regional helpdesks through the LIPs to ensure clients can obtain accurate information quickly and avoid costly delays in integration.</p> <p>To assist in workplace integration and employment retention, design mentorship programs that allow for shared experiences between the mentor and mentee. Mentorship</p> | <p>Provide continuous coaching and training opportunities for employers who want to understand how to hire motivated and skilled newcomers.</p> <p>Provide on-going support to employers to assist in onboarding newcomers to the crew and to assist in integration once on-the-job.</p> | <p>Provide funding pathways that allow for collaboration and co-facilitation of programming between stakeholders. Agencies possess expertise in different areas, and partnership allows for capacity-building within the community to better serve the client.</p> <p>Create programs that assign agencies with trades expertise to support all settlement agencies in increasing their capacity to understand employment pathways and labour</p> |



|                                        | <b>NEWCOMERS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>EMPLOYERS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>SETTLEMENT<br/>SERVICE<br/>PROVIDERS,<br/>REGULATORS AND<br/>EDUCATORS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                        | <p>programs should focus on integration and retention, whereas existing mentorship may concentrate on job acquisition.</p> <p>Provide funding for child care and transportation during training programs. Clients frequently mention challenges in finding appropriate and affordable child care or flexible transportation that allows them to attend programming.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p>market need within the Skilled Trades sectors.</p> <p>Reach out with information to where newcomers are, e.g. ESL classes, newcomer groups on social media. Many newcomers stated they had heard about the programs by word of mouth and wished they had found this information earlier.</p> <p>Assist in the replacement or substitution for lost documents, e.g. education certificates. Refugees, in particular, may have lost their documents and not have any way of replacing them. Provide acceptable and easily obtainable alternatives to proof of education or experience for those that have insurmountable obstacles to locating this information.</p> |
| <b>SKILLS &amp;<br/>QUALIFICATIONS</b> | <p>Continue to provide paid work placements as a component of all career development programming. Consider funding extended placement periods. This has enormous benefits since newcomers often</p>                                                                                                                                                                     | <p>Ensure employers participate in advisory groups and working tables to provide meaningful employment solutions from the employer's perspective. There is a need for employers to articulate</p> | <p>Lessen the responsibility of the newcomer to flex and adapt to the needs of the Canadian workplace. Increase the capacity to assist in adaptation and integration through settlement serving agencies working in</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |



|                                 | <b>NEWCOMERS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>EMPLOYERS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>SETTLEMENT<br/>SERVICE<br/>PROVIDERS,<br/>REGULATORS AND<br/>EDUCATORS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                 | <p>struggle to get work because of a lack of Canadian experience. A work placement, primarily when supported by program staff, helps newcomers develop employers' valued soft skills and learn Canadian workplace culture, including health and safety.</p> <p>Encourage newcomers attending career-development programming to proactively identify suitable placement opportunities and support the trainee by providing job-development services with experienced employment professionals through instruction on writing a Canadian-style resume, interview techniques and soft skills development opportunities.</p> <p>During training programs, offer opportunities to demonstrate entrepreneurial opportunities to newcomers looking to enter the trades.</p> | <p>what skills, qualifications, and suitability they require in hires. Fund employer-focused supports to assist employers in determining qualifications, skills and suitability; translation of documentation, assessment of credentials, occupation-specific language training, orientation to the Canadian workplace, along with targeted outreach campaigns to dissolve confusion and misunderstanding of available services.</p> | <p>cooperation with employers to create clear pathways to success for skilled newcomers. Facilitate staff site visits and monitoring of work placements to allow for early intervention when problems arise and coaching opportunities related to soft skill development. Service providers can act as cultural facilitators through their experience working with both employers and newcomers.</p> |
| <b>LANGUAGE<br/>ACQUISITION</b> | Provide access to occupation-specific                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Coach employers to increase their                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |



|  | <b>NEWCOMERS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>EMPLOYERS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>SETTLEMENT<br/>SERVICE<br/>PROVIDERS,<br/>REGULATORS AND<br/>EDUCATORS</b> |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <p>language acquisition programs and allows for the development of language on the job and in the context of the chosen trade or sector. Recognize that francophone newcomers have special language acquisition needs. Though they may be fluent in one official language, they need English to be more employable.</p> <p>Recognize the importance of providing health and safety training to newcomers in their first languages through increasing the capacity of health and safety trainers to support these programs. While English language proficiency may be at a level of suitability for the workplace, the newcomer must have complete understanding of the health and safety training.</p> | <p>understanding of the Canadian Language Benchmark system and minimum levels required for immigration and career-development programming. Increase employer knowledge of language training offered to newcomers and fund occupation-specific language programming in the workplace.</p> |                                                                               |



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*Trades Talent Link examined the gaps between the skills and qualifications in demand by Skilled Trades employers and those that newcomer job seekers possess. Improving service delivery by narrowing the gaps through innovative programming will serve the client and stakeholders to the fullest.*

## INTRODUCTION

Funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC) Service Delivery Improvement stream, Trades Talent Link focused on examining innovative service design and delivery, resulting in a better understanding of a newcomer's needs in establishing labour market attachment with opportunities in the skilled trades. Findings from this research will allow settlement agencies to champion innovative solutions that better integrate newcomers into the high-demand skilled trades labour market.

The YMCA-YWCA of the National Capital Region (Y NCR) Trades Talent Link's (TTL) objective was to help increase clients' participation in the labour market by improving the understanding of systemic barriers to positive labour market attachment for newcomers and bridging gaps between regulators, employers and newcomers with the ultimate outcome of increasing newcomer participation in the skilled trades.

This report identifies promising practices and makes recommendations to address the gap between newcomer job-seekers and Ottawa skilled trades employers experiencing a labour shortage. The innovative, promising practices identified by Trades Talent Link can be shared and adapted to narrow the gap between newcomers and favourable labour market attachment outcomes across the settlement services sector.

## PROJECT SCOPE

Trades Talent Link activities were designed to measure the impact of existing Y NCR services on newcomers interested in the skilled trades. As well, project staff carried out a mentorship pilot and developed content for an employer education initiative.

Appendix A details the full scope of the project activities from July 2018 to March 2021.

### Research Questions

The evolution of the Y NCR's offerings of programs and services for newcomers in skilled trades has been based on the assumption that there are good jobs in the skilled trades and that newcomers should have access to these "good jobs." Details of the Y NCR's skilled trades programs are found in Appendix B.

Through the Trades Talent Link project, the Y has examined this assumption with our main research questions:

1. What do newcomers consider to be good jobs?
2. Are there good jobs in Ottawa's skilled trades sector? Why aren't more newcomers working in these good jobs?
3. What can be done to improve attracting, hiring and retaining newcomers in good jobs in trades?

### Stakeholders

Early in the project planning phase, staff undertook a stakeholder analysis to ensure potential impacts were aligned with interests. The primary stakeholders are likely to be motivated by and view the results as having high importance. Primary stakeholders were identified as newcomer clients, employers, employer-driven industry associations, industry regulators, skilled trades

### PROMISING PRACTICE: INCREASE CAPACITY OF SETTLEMENT PROVIDERS TO LEAD COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH PROJECTS

Stakeholders are encouraged to understand and recognize the value of community-based participatory research and to recognize that settlement service providers have the capacity to lead research projects that are valuable and meaningful, leading to innovation.

Community members benefit from lived experience and turn that lens to community challenges. Engaging individuals through community-based research means that these populations are engaged in effecting positive social change

educators, and project partners. Secondary stakeholders were identified as staff from other immigrant-serving organizations.

### **Newcomer Client**

Newcomer clients were also referred to as new immigrants throughout the study as it is unlikely that employer stakeholder groups would be able to differentiate between the terms newcomer and immigrant. The following persons were considered to be a newcomer client:

- Permanent Residents of Canada
- Projected Persons as defined in Section 95 of Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA)
- Individuals who have been selected, inside or outside of Canada, to become permanent residents **and** who have been informed, by a letter from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
- Convention Refugees and protected persons outside Canada who have been selected for resettlement in Canada by Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada; and
- Temporary foreign workers who hold or received approval of a work permit under section 112 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations (IRPR) or received initial approval for permanent residence under section 113 of the IRPR.

### **Employers**

Eligible employers or employer-driven associations must carry out at least a part of their business operation by employing skilled tradespeople in at least one of Ontario's recognized trades. No distinction was made between Red Seal, compulsory or voluntary trades for this study.

### **Settlement Service Providers, Project Partners, Education Professionals**

To ensure that the client viewpoint was represented in project activities, settlement service providers and educators serving immigrant populations were issued invitations to participate in Advisory Committee activities. This included project partners Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO) and Hire Immigrants Ottawa (HIO).

## Results Chain

The results chain illustrates TTL's planned activities and what these were designed to accomplish, plus how each activity resulted in an impact on service delivery. The results chain allows project staff to assess to what extent change, if any, took place.

**Table 1: Trades Talent Link Results Chain**

| <b>Organizational context:</b> Y NCR career development programs for newcomers in skilled trades: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power of Trades career development &amp; employment readiness training</li> <li>• Pre-apprenticeship Home Renovation</li> <li>• Pre-apprenticeship Horticulture &amp; Landscaping</li> <li>• Build ON pre-arrival services</li> </ul> |                                               |                                                                 |                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| TTL sub-projects                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Target group                                  | Stakeholder(s)                                                  | Short-term outcomes                                                                                                                    | Longer-term (3 year) outcomes                                                                                      |
| Employer engagement: Employer surveys (2 x 250)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Employers who hire skilled trades             | TTL Advisory Committee (private sector, non-profit, government) | Data on (1) the local labour market in skilled trades (2) employers' relationships with newcomers                                      | Information and analysis for newcomer career development services in skilled trades to support program development |
| Employer engagement: Employer coaching                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Employers who hire skilled trades             | TTL Advisory Committee (private sector, non-profit, government) | Employers participate in online training to increase their willingness and knowledge to hire and train skilled immigrants              | Training materials for employer coaching                                                                           |
| Client Services: Education seminars and trades exploration events                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Newcomers searching for a career path         | TTL Advisory Committee (private sector, non-profit, government) | Newcomers consider the skilled trades as a career. Some of them obtain employment with employers who attend trades exploration events. | Development of practical strategies for successful career events                                                   |
| Client Services: Mentorship pilot project                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Graduates of Y NCR skilled trades programs    | OCISO                                                           | Mentorship project specific to skilled trades is designed, and matches are made                                                        | A "lessons learned" document is written to inform a longer-term program                                            |
| Focus groups                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Participants in Y NCR skilled trades programs | Y NCR programs (Power of Trades, Pre-Apprenticeship)            | Y NCR staff get practical feedback that supports ongoing program design                                                                | Career development programs respond better to newcomer needs                                                       |
| <b>Ultimate outcome</b><br>Newcomers are hired and retained in good jobs in a skilled trade.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                               |                                                                 |                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                    |

## Y NCR Participants Reported Post-Arrival Employment:

Participant-reported work attained in Canada, mostly low wage, included:

- restaurant work
- fast food
- truck, bus or Uber driver
- retail
- gas station
- teaching
- mushroom farm picker
- personal support worker
- Bakery
- Security
- Caregiver
- Janitorial
- computer technician
- cellphone repair
- construction
- carpentry
- painting
- car mechanic
- factory

## ACCESSING GOOD JOBS IN THE SKILLED TRADES

### The Newcomer Client Perspective

As has been well documented, an ageing workforce combined with historically low birth rates has resulted in an acute shortage of workers, across all industries, in Canada.

Subsequently, Canada's Government set ambitious immigration targets to attract educated, skilled and talented workers to ensure that Canada remains economically competitive globally. Programs like the Federal Skilled Worker or Provincial Nominee Programs use a point system to determine the skill level of individuals seeking to immigrate to Canada. While this has attracted highly educated and skilled workers, there remains a disparity between the high-scoring skills and the value employers place on those skills (Fitzsimmons, Baggs, & Schuetze, 2019). Within the settlement-services sector, it is widely perceived that highly educated and skilled newcomers are overrepresented in low-paying sectors such as retail, hospitality or food services. Beyond the fact that jobs in these sectors trend toward minimum wage compensation, they are more likely to be part-time and precarious. Female newcomers are three times more likely to be working part-time and 2.5 times more likely to be employed in positions considered temporary (Ng & Gagnon, 2020). This is despite evidence that those selected for immigration through the points-systems are likely to have higher educational attainment than natural-born Canadians.

Statistics Canada's 2016 census shows that immigrants who hold a doctorate in a STEM field (science, technology, engineering or mathematics) have equivalent employment rates to natural-born Canadians who possess comparable qualifications, but on an annual basis earn approximately 9% less than natural-born Canadians (Ng & Gagnon, 2020).

Trades Talent Link conducted seventeen (17) focus groups with a total of 147 participants, all of whom were or had been clients of the Y NCR's pre-employment programs in the skilled trades. A summary of the questions asked in these focus groups is shown in Appendix D.

When focus group participants were asked whether they believed that there were good jobs in the trades, the answer was an overwhelming "yes." This reflected participants' motivation to move beyond "survival" jobs, a trigger that had brought them to a Y NCR program. Some participants mentioned that there were also poorly paid jobs in the trades, especially at the entry-level.

Focus group participants identified various elements of a "good job." Elements that were mentioned most frequently were (in no particular order):

- good pay
- learning and career development
- job security
- positive relationships with co-workers
- benefits

### **PROMISING PRACTICE: INCORPORATE PROGRAM EVALUATION TO ASSESS OUTCOMES**

All programs collect performance data, typically in the form of feedback surveys. These surveys are limited in a number of ways: they have a low response rate unless program facilitators are available to supervise the completion of the form, newcomers with lower levels of language acquisition may not have a full understanding of what is required and may shy away from a written form, and research has shown that most individuals will respond to a feedback survey with the highest levels of satisfaction without truly reflecting on the answer.

In addition to feedback surveys, TTL incorporated focus groups into its internal program evaluation. Focus groups allowed individuals to provide their nuanced perception of the usefulness and quality of the training program, focusing on the ultimate outcome of securing long-term, quality employment. Parenthetically, the discussion groups allowed individuals to practice their language skills.

- a feeling of accomplishment; doing what you're good at
- job location and work hours

**Good pay:** Though this was the most essential element of a good job for many participants, there were just as many for whom it was not a priority at this time, for whom it was more important to get started on a career. They believed that getting experience and developing skills would lead to better pay farther on. On the other hand, most participants believed that minimum wage was not sufficient to support a family. There were also reasons to focus on good pay for future planning – to save money for the future, perhaps to open one's own business or for retirement.

**Learning and career development:** Gaining useful experience was a high priority for many participants to get employment and future career development and promotions. Aspects of learning that were mentioned included understanding Canadian workplace culture and learning workplace safety practices to keep oneself and others safe.

**Job security:** This was important to participants so they could support their families. Having job security would also reduce worry about having to look for the next job.

**Positive relationships with co-workers:** Many people mentioned teamwork as something vital to them. Others spoke about how important it was to have good relationships with co-workers since you spend so much of your time with them.

**Benefits:** The importance of workplace benefits varied with the age and family status of participants. Medical and dental benefits were perceived to reduce stress because they would provide a cushion against the unexpected. Participants with children were particularly interested in medical benefits and holidays. Older participants were concerned about pensions.

**Accomplishment:** Participants wanted to do work that matched their skills, something they would be good at. In one group, they explained that you would get bored and unmotivated if you were not doing something useful.

**Job location and work hours:** A job close to home or "near where my daily life is" was important to some participants, for example, those with children. Reliable and not-too-long (or at least paid) work hours were also important to some participants to manage their non-working time.

For a newcomer, the perception of a skilled trades career may not match their own or their families' vision of success. When envisioning a new life in Canada, they likely see success as a white-collar job in a typical office environment instead of more physically-demanding skilled trades jobs. Indeed, they may have a perception of the word "trade" as being "retail." Post-arrival problems with foreign-acquired skills, work experience, and education may provide a newcomer with the motivation to seek an alternative career to meet their families' immediate needs. Y NCR clients explained that they had good family support for their interest in the skilled trades. Some participants said that, though trades were a good option for newcomers, they would not encourage their children to pursue a trade.

Some people had discovered that their previous career was impossible to continue in Canada. When speaking of the expense of retraining: several people mentioned that they were pursuing an "easier" trade with a shorter learning curve.

The Y NCR has identified three distinct groups of clients who seek services – career changers, career continuers and career shifters. YMCA-YWCA staff can

## MEET SID



Sid registered with Build ON because he felt that the skilled trades would be an excellent fit for him, considering his background as a civil engineer back in India. He was hoping to find an alternative career. Alternative careers apply transferable skills and experience in employment opportunities that are different from the original occupation. With his Employment Consultant's help, he narrowed down the various Skilled Trades he was interested in and developed a career action plan. He was provided with labour market information about his trade of choice and relevant resources. When Sid arrived in Ottawa, he was referred to the Y NCR's Power of Trades program. During the program, he received employment support from an employment consultant at the Y Employment Access Centre and the job developers at the Power of Trades program. Before graduating from the Power of Trades program, Sid successfully obtained a job in as a sheet metal worker.

## MEET BENGHY



Benghy is from Haiti. He registered with Build ON Pre-Arrival Services to find out how he would be able to start his career in the as an automotive mechanic upon his arrival to Ottawa. With the help of his Employment Consultant he gained a better insight into the skilled trades sector in Ontario and understood how to navigate the employment pathways in this sector before his arrival. He got familiar with job searching strategies in Canada. With the help of his Employment Consultant, he improved his resume and he was referred directly to the Power of Trades program at the YMCA-YWCA and participated in their pre-employment training program; Now Benghy is working in Ottawa in the skilled trades sector as a horticultural technician.

use these classifications to help guide clients as they seek labour market attachments.

Clients considered to be career changers have little to no experience in the skilled trades. Usually, they've spent some time in Canada searching for work within their pre-arrival career field. Likely they have worked survival jobs - many of the program participants identify to the Y staff that, before attending employment training, they have been working in retail, driving Uber, restaurants, gas station attendants and other jobs that typically pay minimum wage and offer little security. Career shifters have a high probability of a STEM background and are now seeking more stability in their Canadian career. They may have arrived with the expectation of making a lateral move in their professional career without thoroughly investigating the Canadian job market. Perhaps they experienced a successful career as an engineer before immigrating and have discovered the time-consuming process of accreditation in Canada. They may have had prior experience exploring skilled trades jobs and can see the possibility that their technical skills will transfer into a trade.

Career continuers will have had pre-arrival experience in the skilled trades. Frequently, they have encountered barriers to entering their trade for some of the same reasons mentioned above, or they may not have understood the pathways to certification. Among Y NCR clients'

responses, there was a general perception that trades' training was a faster route to a good job than attending a post-secondary institution.

The skilled trades are a specialized focus area and newcomer job-seekers need this information early in their settlement journey. It is recommended that organizations with trade expertise, such as the Y NCR, create outreach campaigns to increase all settlement service providers' capacity to encourage new immigrants to view the skilled trades as strong pathways to economic integration.

Trades Talent Link developed and delivered information sessions through a workshop entitled "Accessing Good Jobs in the Trades." The audience for this workshop was newcomer job-seekers.

"Accessing good jobs in the skilled trades" aimed to introduce skilled trades in Ontario as a viable career path, developed and delivered to newcomer job seekers. In general, the seminars were intended for newcomers with CLB 5+, but a simplified English version for attendees with CLB 3+ was developed to be used as part of career orientation effort at an earlier stage in some ESL classes, settlement agencies, and refugee sponsoring communities. In Year 1, the seminar was piloted in Arabic and Spanish to reach numerous newcomers with lower English language levels. The seminars' content was designed to clarify in simplified language the most important and yet difficult for newcomers' understanding information and concepts, such as trades' regulations, apprenticeship, foreign experience recognition, labour market trends. The seminar also provided information about employment support services specializing in the skilled trades available in Ottawa, such as YMCA-YWCA pre-apprenticeships programs and pre-employment bridging program "Power of Trades."

In year 2, a webinar was developed and hosted, using the existing educational seminar's content. The webinar was delivered to newcomer job seekers in Ottawa as well as to pre-arrival service clients.

During Year 3, with the pandemic's onset, the webinar became the primary delivery method, and having it developed and piloted before the March 2020 lockdown, assured the non-interrupted service during the transition to the remote mode of operation. However, despite efforts made to adapt its content to the online delivery format using diverse engagement strategies, a decrease in overall attendance and difficulties in the data collection were observed. This issue with low attendance was mainly due to the lack of the structured and trusted

environment provided by an in-class setting where seminars were delivered to large groups consisting of 60-100 students gathered simultaneously and supervised and encouraged to participate by their teachers actively.

To test the theory of disseminating information in areas that experience high traffic from newcomer job-seekers, project staff worked with local immigration partners to have those partners host the session, with TTL staff facilitating the session. Before the pandemic, when project staff offered to ESL/LINC classes or community services, there was a higher attendance at the event.

Community partners who hosted seminars/webinars:

- Catholic Center for Immigrants
- YMCA-YWCA Employment Access Center
- YMCA-YWCA Build ON pre-arrival services
- Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB)
- Ottawa Catholic School Board (OCSB)
- Réseau du soutien de l'immigration francophone de l'Ontario de l'Est (RSIFEO)
- Youth Services Bureau (YSB)
- City of Ottawa
- Ottawa Chinese Community Service Center (OCCSC)
- Somali Center for Family Services

Many newcomers don't consider skilled trades as a career option based on these jobs' negative image in their countries of origin. They opt for "good" jobs in white-collar professions, which leads them to unrealistic decisions and lost opportunities.

Requirements to enter the trades, such as trades license or Canadian high school diploma, are viewed as an unanticipated barrier and contribute to newcomers' disinterest in the skilled trades.

Many newcomers still look at skilled trades as unattractive jobs even when they get the correct information and start thinking of skilled trades as a good career option. Their families and peers highly influence them, usually advising against skilled trades and encouraging other jobs, especially those with appealing titles.

Educating newcomers about the Canadian workplace culture in general and especially within the skilled trades is crucial and will positively impact how quickly prospective newcomer tradespersons will integrate into the field and their performance.

## Perceived Barriers to Employment

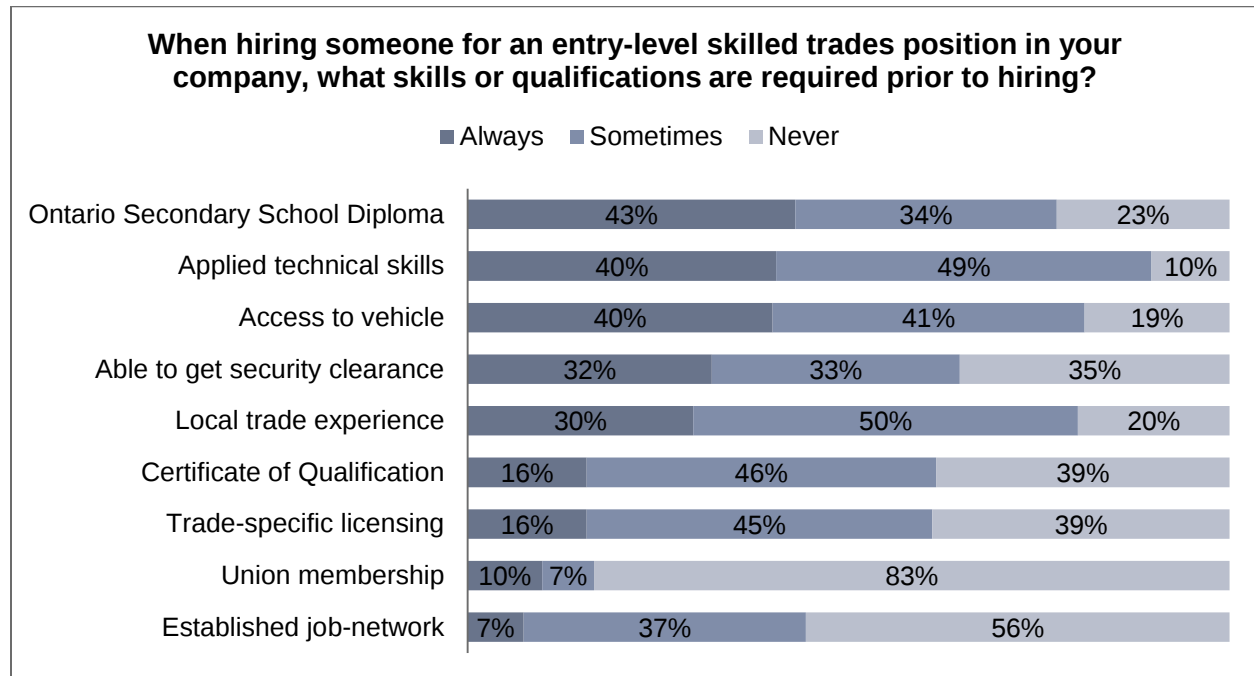
Clients identified challenges that they had experienced when looking for employment in the trades and what they expected to find difficult when they obtained a first Canadian job.

The two challenges that came up the most often were inadequate English language skills and a lack of Canadian experience.

Some of the other challenges which were discussed were:

- Caring for children while working.
- Missing documents from the home country: sometimes documents had been lost when leaving the home country (particularly for refugees), or it had not occurred to newcomers to obtain or keep records such as proof of education or a driver's license before immigration.
- Canadian employers focus on soft skills, especially communication skills. This can be difficult to adapt to for participants whose past experience has been that formal qualifications are the most essential factor for employability.
- Not having a personal network. Participants were aware that many jobs are filled by word of mouth, by an employer asking employees if they know someone who might want to work there.
- Needing a driver's license and a car.
- Racism, ageism and sexism.

To further understand the gap between employer expectation of necessary skills and qualifications and clients' perceived challenges, employers were asked, *"When hiring someone for an entry-level skilled trades position in your company, what skills or qualifications are required prior to hiring?"*. Figure 1 details the responses.



**Figure 1: Survey 1. n=253. Employer expectation of skills and qualifications required for entry-level skilled trades employment**

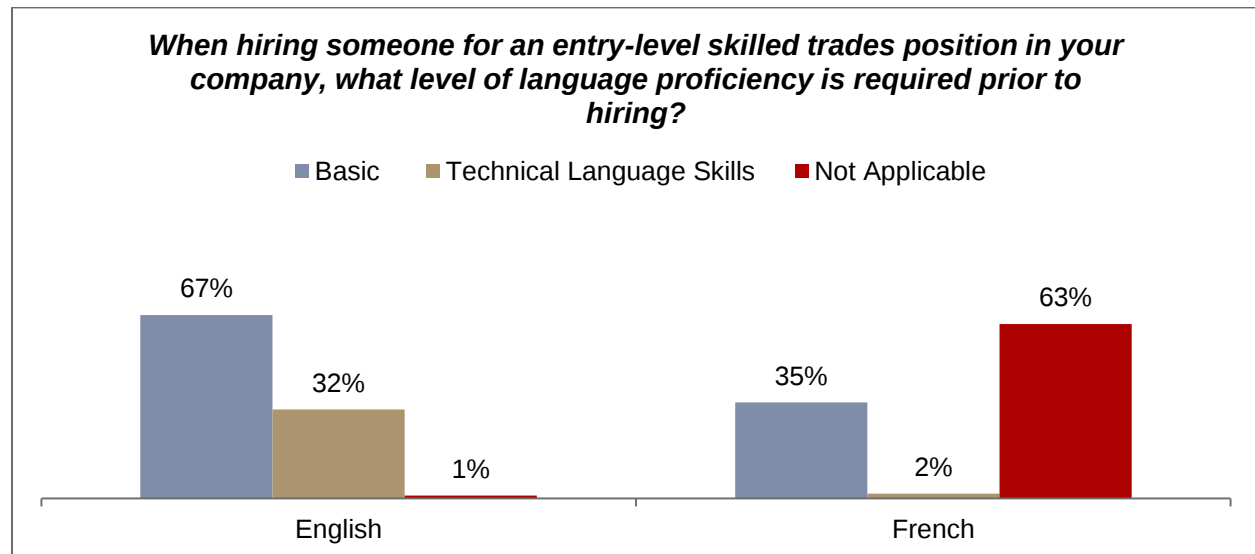
### Language Proficiency

Among Y NCR clients' responses, there was a general perception that a lower level of English would be required in the trades. English was necessary for getting a job; this was also true for participants who spoke fluent French. In Ottawa, the frequent requirement for bilingualism was an obstacle to getting a job. When asked to look ahead to their first jobs in the skilled trades, some participants were worried that they would not have adequate training or that they would be struggling to communicate in English.

Skilled trades employers have long indicated that language proficiency concerns relate to the stringent health and safety measures ingrained into a trades' work culture and legislated in Canada. An employee must be able to understand and respond to legislated requirements. Plus, they need to be able to give and receive detailed instructions when completing tasks. In most cases, verbal language proficiency needs to be at a basic level, while complex writing would not be a requirement of the job.

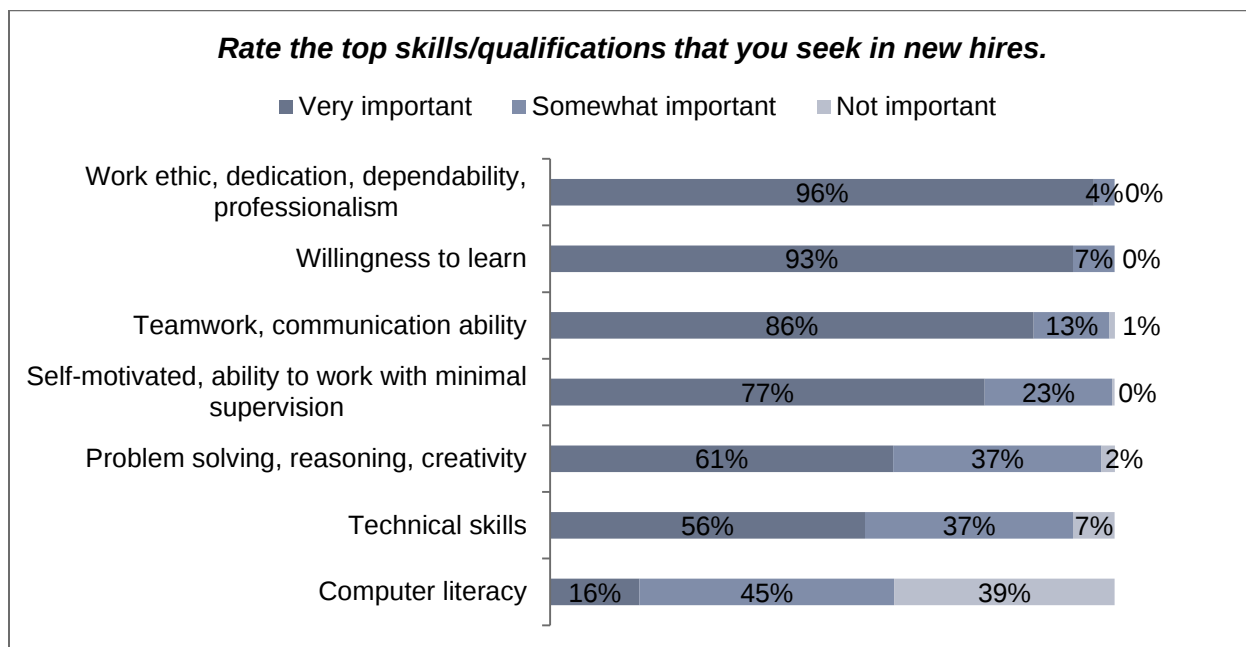
As shown in figure 2, employers surveyed were asked, "When hiring someone for an entry-level skilled trades position in your company, what level of language proficiency is required prior to hiring?". Sixty-seven percent of respondents indicated that basic level English would be sufficient for a new hire. Trades Talent Link probed employers further by conducting in-person

interviews with a small sample of those who'd indicated that they were open to further discussion. In those interviews, there was consensus that a high level of English fluency was not expected for entry-level positions. Most employers said that the job seeker has to communicate, but the actual language level was less important. Though language is a challenge for newcomers, this suggests that it may not be as much of an obstacle as they may perceive. Further investigation is necessary to determine how an employer defines "basic" language competency. However, English-French bilingualism was essential for some.



**Figure 2: Survey 1. n=253. Employer expectation of language proficiency for entry-level skilled trades employment (2019)**

The ability to communicate clearly is considered to be a soft skill. However, lower levels of language proficiency are not the only consideration when employers were asked about the importance of soft skills in the 2020/21 survey. Figure 3 illustrates these responses. Ninety-six percent of employers surveyed said that work ethic, dedication and dependability were very important, while 86% stated that communication ability was essential. This indicates that future training programs should emphasize soft skills development throughout the program. While soft skills are not easily quantifiable or considered trainable since they are innate to the individual, emphasizing the importance of developing these skills will help the job-seeker meet an employer's expectations. For example, work ethics can be modelled within the program by trainers requiring clients to complete all program components and demonstrate punctuality and attendance daily. When this is done, these skills become ingrained.



**Figure 3: Survey 2. n=226. Employer expectation of soft skill proficiency for entry-level skilled trades employment (2019)**

Since most pre-employment and employment training programs include job search techniques, programs should also include training the client to articulate these soft skills on a resume and during the interview process. When training programs undergo curriculum design or review, there is an emphasis on ensuring technical skills are developed. Considering evidence gathered

by both surveys, service providers would better serve the client by strengthening soft skills development.

### Canadian Work Experience

Only 30% of employers felt that local trades experience was necessary for a candidate to be hired. Interestingly, amongst the group of employers who were further probed during interviews, all of the employers in that group said they did not require Canadian experience. Some required previous experience, but not necessarily in Canada. Others said that no experience was needed. Several of them referred to workplace

### PROMISING PRACTICE: INCORPORATE SOFT SKILL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES INTO TRAINING PROGRAMS

The reality is – employers can train for the technical skills and job-seekers are likely to possess at least entry-level technical skills when leaving a training program. The majority of employers are looking for strong soft skills like communication teamwork, work ethic, time management, commitment and reliability. Identifying opportunities to strengthen soft skills ensures that newcomers are well positioned to transition to the workplace.

training once people were hired or to probation periods as a tool to evaluate suitability to the trade. Work placements provide an opportunity for an employer to assess skills.

A 2019 World Education Services study suggested that competency-based assessment (task) could assist employers in their ability to recognize work experience gained elsewhere. Indeed, implementing a competency-based assessment process into the skilled trades is likely less problematic than in other professions. The apprenticeship training standards are skills/competency-based. Frequently, employers will test technical skills competency during the hiring process by providing a small job to complete. For example, a welder may be asked to perform a small welding task as part of their job interview. The trades training systems are already set-up to assess competencies easily, and it is part of the hiring culture in many instances.

Employer expectations around work experience are inconsistent with the perception by both newcomer job-seekers and settlement service providers. Many

participants said that it was impossible to get work without being able to demonstrate Canadian experience. Frustratingly, they needed Canadian experience to get work but couldn't get the experience unless they got a job. Those who had had a work placement or a co-operative work experience had found that invaluable.

### **PROMISING PRACTICE: INCORPORATE MEANINGFUL WORK PLACEMENTS INTO DELIVERY OF CAREER- DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMING**

Work with local employers to provide work placements to provide newcomers with strong experiential learning opportunities in a lower risk environment. This has enormous benefits, since newcomers often struggle to get work because of a lack of Canadian experience. A work placement, especially when it is supported by program staff, helps newcomers learn about Canadian workplace culture, including health and safety.

Encourage newcomers attending career-development programming to pro-actively identify suitable placement opportunities and support the trainee by providing job-development services with experienced employment professionals through instruction on writing a Canadian-style resume, interview techniques and soft skills development opportunities.

Facilitate service provider staff site visits and monitoring of work placements to allow for early intervention when problems arise.

Arrange opportunities for the employer to provide formal feedback on job performance and soft skills development.

### **PROMISING PRACTICE: INCORPORATE MENTORSHIP INTO TRAINING PROGRAMS WITH A FOCUS ON INTEGRATION**

In partnership with sister organizations with the expertise in mentorship, create mentorship opportunities focused on job retention instead of job search techniques. Clients will have received job search support during programming. Integration should be the focus of post-program mentorship.

Ensure mentorship focuses on developing the soft skills highly-valued by Canadian employers.

Provide active staff support to mentor-mentee pairs at all stages of the mentorship program and longer-term support. It is essential to recognize when there is a potential loss of momentum and intervene proactively.

Support mentors and mentees with events and workshops, which are both skill-building and energizing. Group events can enrich the mentorship experience and fill gaps in the mentors' ability (skills and knowledge) to support their mentees.

Plan for the detailed logistics of communication at the time of matching mentors and mentees. This includes communication between the mentorship facilitator, participants and between matches.

Offer services outside of regular office hours. This is particularly important for tradespeople who do not work in an office (lack of access to electronic means of communication) or work standard hours.

The benefits of work placement or co-operative work experience in overcoming the lack of Canadian experience partially relate to interview preparation, verbal/non-verbal communication during the interview process, along with an avenue to build a professional network. It is possible that the client incorrectly perceives a lack of Canadian work experience. It could be a lack of preparation for an interview and transmitting a poor fit with the organization during the interview.

In addition to work placements, mentorship programs can be designed to offer support in integration into the Canadian workplace culture. The Y NCR pre-employment training and pre-apprenticeship programs are informative, engaging, and helpful in preparing graduates to enter the skilled trades labour market. Job developers at the Y have successfully provided work placements for the participants after completing the training programs. However, previous experiences showed that many of the participants exit the work placement lacking the support they need to secure employment. Many of them struggle to build professional networks that will help them successfully integrate into a Canadian workplace. According to the employers, although newcomers have the technical skills, they often lack the valued soft skills such as communication, problem-solving,

and teamwork to excel at work. A mentorship could assist in the newcomer's development of these skills within the Canadian workplace context.

While community partners offer different mentoring programs in Ottawa, they are not framed around tradespeople's employment needs. Given the uniqueness of skilled trades' language, culture, and hiring practices, newcomer job seekers require different kinds of help and support when finding employment in the trades. By designing a trades-specific mentoring program, TTL intended to fill the gaps related to the newcomers' integration in the skilled trades labour market. OCISO's experience with mentorship programs for newcomers made it an obvious partner for TTL.

Mentors believe that their own "lived experiences" as immigrants and/or newcomers had enabled them to gain insight into settlement and employment challenges similar to what new students might be experiencing after completing their training programs. They felt that they had a deep understanding of those challenges and wished to make it a little smoother for the mentees to start their career paths.

As the TTL director explained: "Retention is where we see that newcomers have a bigger issue in terms of the job market in the trades. And I think that's where we need to put the support," specifically for mentees to gain insight into workplace expectations.

After Survey 1, which provided insights into employers' needs and the barriers that newcomers might face in the workplace, a mentorship pilot took place. For this reason, the mentorship program focused on soft skills to complement the technical skills required in the skilled trades to assist newcomers with their transition into the Canadian workplace.

## **Education, Certificate of Qualification and Trade-specific Licensing**

Possession of a Certificate of Qualification (C of Q) or trade-specific licensing was less important to most employers surveyed. A C of Q is awarded to individuals who have completed the apprenticeship pathway and successfully passed their exam. The C of Q or a signed apprenticeship training agreement is required for individuals working in regulated (compulsory) trades. Trades-specific licensing refers to licensing needed to work in trades such as gas fitter or elevator (hydraulic) service technician. Usually, trade-specific licensing is awarded by regulatory bodies such as the Technical Standards and Safety Authority (TSSA). In these cases, the training is primarily completed on-the-job with some in-school training required.

For those arriving with experience in a regulated trade, the Trades Equivalency Assessment (TEA) may provide a certification pathway. TEA is for experienced tradespeople who have not completed an Ontario apprenticeship and want to become eligible to challenge the certification examination to obtain an Ontario Certificate of Qualification (C of Q). However, the TEA process can be strenuous and unclear for a newcomer to navigate without appropriate guidance from settlement service providers or the regulatory agency. Even if the newcomer is successful in gaining recognition for past experience through TEA, this is not the end of their journey. They will still face previously mentioned barriers to employment.

To be approved, the newcomer must provide adequate proof of hours of experience and demonstrated skills in the trade that are equal to or exceed the standard of training that an Ontario apprentice receives in completing an apprenticeship program. The trade's Training Standard defines the criteria that must be met for each trade.

Providing the documentation required to complete the TEA process successfully is problematic for refugees who may not have access to either the individuals needed to provide proof of experience or whose documentation may have been destroyed through no fault of the applicant. Additionally, documentation must be provided in English or French, meaning newcomers will need to obtain the documents and translate them at their expense. Even if someone offers all of the required documents, there is no guarantee that the TEA application will be approved. In this case, considerable time, effort and resources will have been wasted in the pursuit of the TEA approval when the individual might have spent the same on securing an apprenticeship opportunity. As clients mentioned, many have not thought that these documents would be required, so gaining copies can be problematic, particularly for refugees.

It is recommended that the TEA process be adapted to make it more accessible for newcomers. Trade-specific practical assessment of skills, similar to the Canadian Welding Bureau<sup>1</sup> certification processes, could alleviate the burden of proof of hours.

### **Driver's License and Access to a Vehicle**

Access to a vehicle is an essential requirement for many skilled trades jobs because individuals are often required to travel between job sites, and the physical location of the organizations hiring may be outside of areas served by municipal transportation services. This is not unique to newcomers seeking employment in the skilled trades. It is a requirement that is clearly stated in the majority of job postings. For example, an automotive service technician needs to be a licensed driver to move cars in and out of the garage.

For newcomers arriving from countries without a reciprocal agreement, individuals must provide written confirmation of driving experience. This written confirmation must be obtained from the original licensing agent or the Embassy, Consulate or High Commission representing the country. In Ontario, the application process depends on the country of origin, type of license, documentation/identification available, and years of driving experience. Ontario's licensing regulations include a graduated licensing process, and the number of years of experience will dictate where the newcomer is placed in the graduated system. For newcomers arriving from a country that does not have a license exchange agreement with Ontario they may be eligible to receive credit for their foreign driving experience. However, they are still required to pass all applicable tests to earn an Ontario driver's license.

While there are reciprocal agreements in place with some countries such as Australia, the United States, France and Korea, the process of obtaining a driver's license for newcomers

#### **PROMISING PRACTICE: PROVIDE INFORMATION TO THE CLIENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE**

Settlement service providers should increase their capacity to understand the required skills and qualifications desired by skilled trades employers through partnerships with trades-advocacy agencies (such as Skills Ontario) and provide that information to newcomers as soon as possible.

Trades-focused pre-arrival services like the Y NCR's Build On provide essential opportunities for newcomers to arrive prepared with the necessary paperwork to obtain credential equivalencies and driver's license.

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<sup>1</sup> The CWB Group certifies companies, inspection organizations, inspectors, and welding consumables through a review and qualification process to ensure that they meet the requirements for a variety of product and safety codes as well as standards such as CSA W47.1, CSA W47.2, CSA W55.3, CSA W186, CSA W178.1, CSA W178.2 and CSA W48.

arriving from countries without a reciprocal agreement may not be something a newcomer has prioritized. Additionally, it may not be something that they have considered before arrival

Settlement service providers need to be aware of the requirement for a driver's license for those newcomers interested in the skilled trades and provide complete information on the required documentation so the client can begin the process as soon as possible.

### **Ability to Obtain Security Clearance**

In Ottawa, because the Federal Government is the largest employer with extensive physical assets, obtaining a security clearance can be a barrier that is not considered in other regions. A security clearance is required for contractors to work inside federal government buildings. To apply, the individual will need to have lived in Canada for a minimum of 5 years; this excludes newcomers.

Several trades operate outside of the industrial, institutional and commercial construction sectors. For example, a hairstylist is a Red Seal trade and would not need access to a federal government facility to operate within the trade. The residential construction industry would not require a security clearance.

The inability to obtain a clearance should not present an insurmountable barrier to employment, but service providers should take an active role in advising the client that alternative jobs may be available that don't require a security clearance.

### **Established Job Network**

While only 7% of employers saw an established job network as a requirement, this is frequently mentioned in literature referencing labour market attachment for newcomers as problematic. Perhaps this is less of a skill/qualification than a part of job-search skills.

Understanding what an effective network is and how to develop one lies within the responsibilities of service providers who are delivering pre-employment training.

### **Union Membership**

During the survey activities, it was difficult to elicit responses from employers who hire through union halls. Therefore the actual value of union membership in specific trades such as electrical, plumbing or industrial/institutional/commercial carpentry may not be well represented in the survey results. Hiring practices of union halls are outside the scope of this project.

## The Employer Perspective

### Motivation to Hire

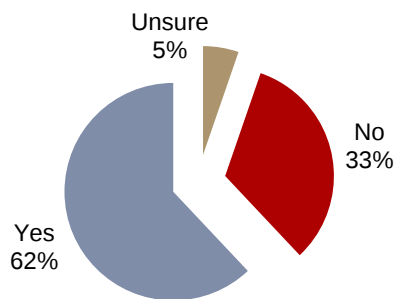
After decades of career influencers (parents, families, peers, teachers, guidance counsellors) delivering the message that the only educational pathway to a good job is acquiring a university degree, the skilled trades are experiencing a perfect storm. An ageing workforce poised on retirement and few recruits have created a shortage of skilled workers entering a trade. Indeed, much has been written on shortages in the skilled trades and the importance of encouraging underrepresented groups to examine the trades as a good career path. Reviewing the causes of the shortage was out of scope for this project.

Employer engagement is a critical component of workforce development programs because it is through these activities that service providers can better align programs with employers' needs. This results in more robust opportunities for clients to be hired into good jobs.

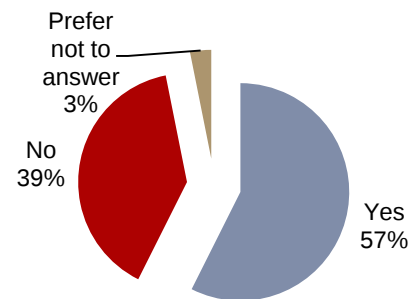
To better understand the labour market shortage from the employer's perspective, TTL conducted two employer engagement surveys, Survey 1 in 2018/19 and Survey 2 in 2020/21. Questions posed examined hiring practices, an employer's understanding of apprenticeship and apprenticeship regulation, their motivation to hire newcomers, and their ability to view newcomers as an essential labour source. The questionnaires are found in Appendix E.

Illustrated in figures 4 and 5 to demonstrate labour market need, TTL asked employers if a shortage of skilled labour currently impacted them.

***Does a shortage of skilled labour currently impact the success and/or growth of your business?***



**Figure 4: Survey 1<sup>2</sup>, n=253. Employer perception of labour shortage impact on business success or growth (2019)**



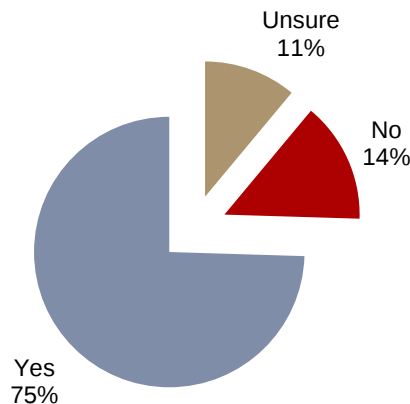
**Figure 5: Survey 2<sup>3</sup>, n=226. Employer perception of labour shortage impact on business success or growth (2021)**

Next, employers were asked if they perceived this impact as continuing over the next five years. Figure 6 and Figure 7 illustrate the results. While the number of employers who predict labour shortages as impacting their business over the next five years dropped in the time between the two surveys, a possible explanation can be seen in the percentage who responded "unsure." COVID-19 has created uncertainty in the labour market, explaining the difference in the rate answering "yes." In 2020/21, TTL also asked employers if their business priorities had changed due to the pandemic. At the time of the survey, 56% responded that priorities had changed, while 35% said no, and 9% could not predict at this time. The response to that question perhaps shows a potential shift in hiring needs that could explain the answers to shortages of skilled workers. The economic shutdowns have hit the service sector hard (hairstylists, chefs, cooks, bakers), and this is likely reflected in the answers that employers gave to that question.

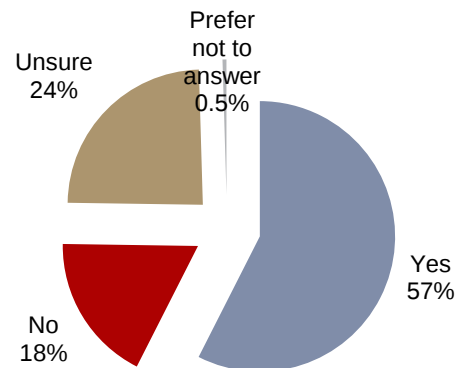
<sup>2</sup> In survey 1 the answer option of "unsure" was provided. Project staff felt this option allowed employers to "opt out" of providing an accurate answer. The term was removed from options in survey 2.

<sup>3</sup> Employers provided comments to supplement this response. The majority indicated that Covid-19 was a potential influence on their hiring needs.

**Do you foresee a shortage of skilled labour impacting the success and/or growth of your business over the next 5 years?**

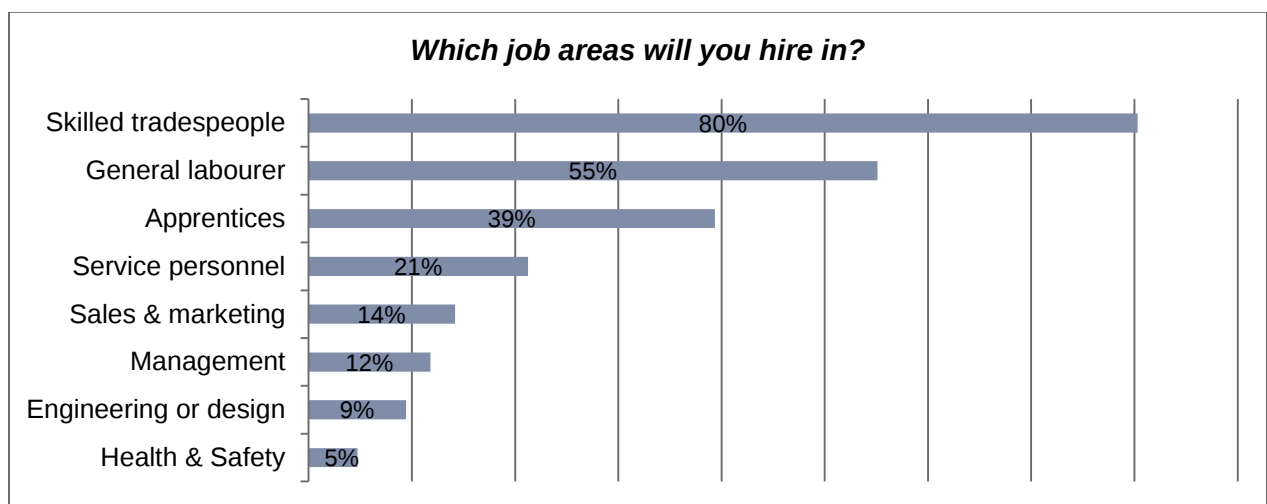


**Figure 6: Survey 1. n=253. Employer perception of potential long-term effects of labour shortages (2019)**



**Figure 7: Survey 2. n=226. Employer perception of potential long term effects of labour shortages (2021)**

Despite the impact of COVID-19, 58% of respondents indicated that they planned to hire within the next 12 months, 28% said they were unsure of hiring plans, and 14% said they had no plans to hire in the next year. Of those planning to hire, 80% expect to hire skilled tradespeople. Figure 8 also shows other job functions employers expect to hire in the next 12 months.



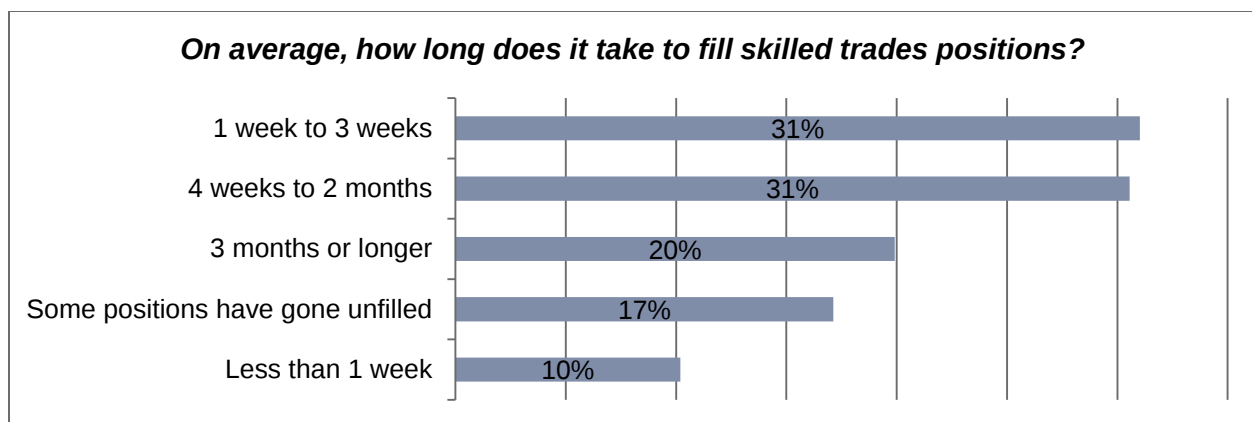
**Figure 8<sup>4</sup>: Survey 2, n=226. Information on potential hiring by job function**

<sup>4</sup> Rate of response may be >100% as respondents were able to select more than one option

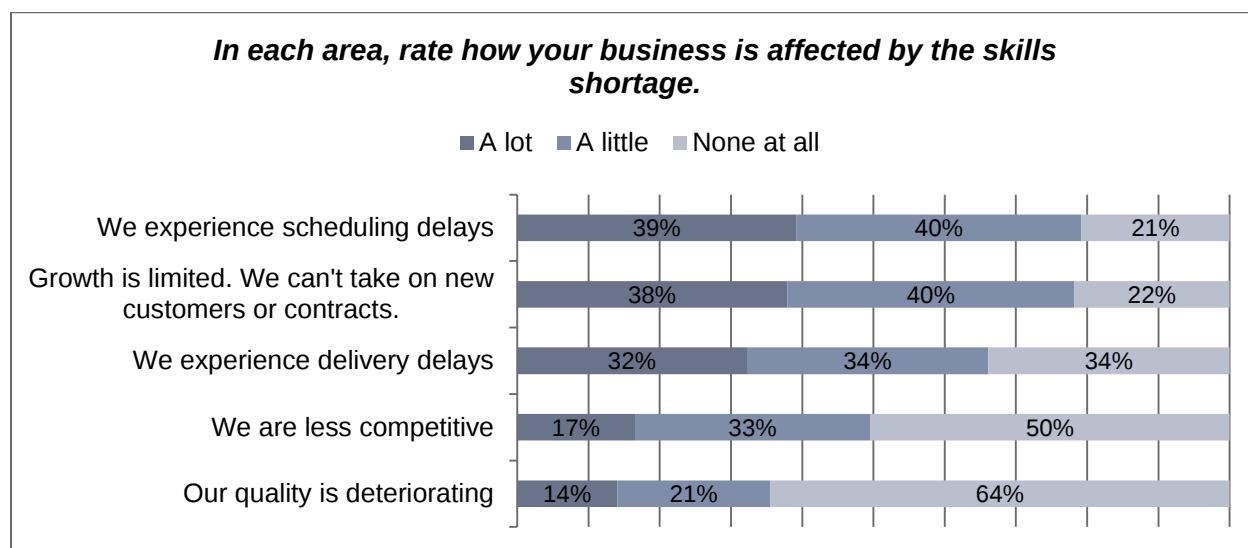
TTL was interested in examining the potential impact of these labour shortages and asked a series of questions during Survey 2. When asked how difficult it was to recruit qualified candidates for skilled trades jobs, 55% stated it had been difficult, while 33% responded it was neither easy nor difficult and 12% said it was easy. Also, employers provided comments in response to this question. Many expressed that COVID-19 had impacted their hiring plans, and they could not onboard new hires currently.

Probing further, employers who had responded that it was difficult to find qualified candidates for skilled trades jobs were then asked why it was challenging to fill these positions. Of interest, 48% of employers stated that no applicants had applied to the vacancies. TTL staff selected a small group of employers who volunteered to participate in an interview between the first and second surveys. Within this group, the majority of employers said that finding skilled workers is a challenge. Other challenges mentioned included the difficulty of finding people willing to do physically demanding jobs and the challenge of hiring people for what are by their nature seasonal jobs.

Employers were asked approximately how long it takes to fill skilled trades vacancies. Significantly, 17% of all skilled trades vacancies are going unfilled, and the majority is taking from 1 month to several months to fill, as demonstrated in figure 9. Consequently, employers are experiencing negative impacts on their business operations, as shown in figure 10.



**Figure 9: Survey 2, n=226. Employer expectation of average length of time to fill skilled trades vacancies (2021)**



**Figure 10: Survey 2, n=226. Employer perception of the impact of labour shortage impact on business operations (2021)**

The survey results demonstrate that employers are having difficulty filling vacancies. These difficulties are impacting their businesses and, ultimately, the consumer.

### **Perception of Newcomers as a Source of Skilled Labour**

An employer's perception of the skills, qualifications and fit of newcomers in the workplace may be informed by limited experience, and they may expect that newcomers are unable to meet the specific requirements of their organization's new hires.

### **PROMISING PRACTICE: RECOGNIZE THE UNIQUENESS OF A SKILLED TRADES WORKPLACE**

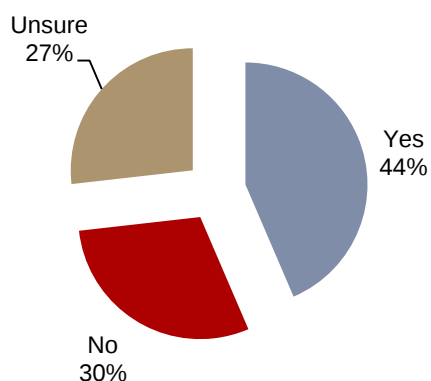
Service providers need to increase their capacity to recognize the uniqueness of a skilled trades workplace. Most of these workplaces will be small-to-medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that may not have HR support – often, the business owner is also the hiring manager. That means that their attention will usually be more focused on running their business versus recruitment. An opportunity exists for service providers to relieve the burden of recruitment and provide meaningful service to the employer.

Take the time to schedule a site visit and travel to see the working conditions to assist in determining suitability of the job matched against the client's expectations.

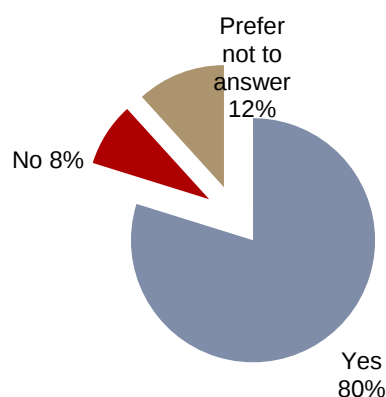
During both surveys, employers were asked if they saw newcomers as an essential labour source for their organizations. Figures 11 and 12<sup>5</sup> show the response to this question.

Exploring the increase in positive responses from one survey to the next, employers may now be aware of the critical importance of recruiting workers from traditionally underrepresented groups to fill the need in the skilled trades labour market. A scan of current literature on this topic will demonstrate that youth, women and Indigenous workers are often targeted in recruitment strategies. Additionally, there has been activity within the skilled trades employment sectors in the period between the two surveys to increase awareness of the need to recruit workers from underrepresented populations.

***Do you believe that new immigrants are an important labour source for your company?***



**Figure 11: Survey 1, n=253. Employer motivation to view new immigrants as an essential labour source (2019)**

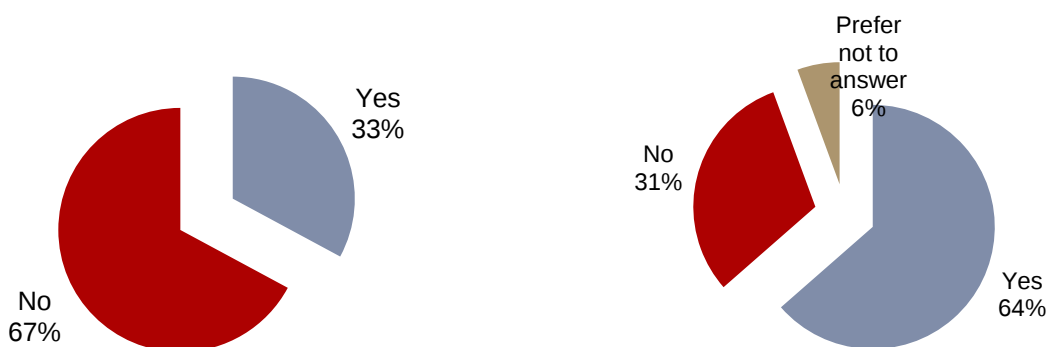


**Figure 12: Survey 2, n=226. Employer motivation to view new immigrants as an essential labour source (2021)**

While employers view newcomers as an important labour source, many have not hired newcomers, as reflected in figures 13 and 14. When an employer responded that they had not hired newcomers, they were then asked why not. As shown in figures 15 and 16, the overwhelming majority said newcomers had not applied to vacancies. This supports findings that newcomers do not view the trades as a career option based on these jobs' negative image in their countries of origin.

<sup>5</sup> In the first survey, the answer options accounted for an “unsure” response. When authoring the 2<sup>nd</sup> survey questionnaire, the project team discussed the potential that “unsure” allowed an employer who may be uncomfortable with the question to “opt-out” by selecting that response option. Therefore, the decision was made to include “prefer not to answer” as a response option. Interpretation of “prefer not to answer” response varies amongst researchers. Consensus that it may indicate that respondent was not aware of new immigrants hired.

**To your knowledge, has your organization hired any new immigrants in the past 12 months?**



**Figure 13: Survey 1, n=253. Unsure response=0%. Information on the number of organizations that have hired new immigrants (2019)**

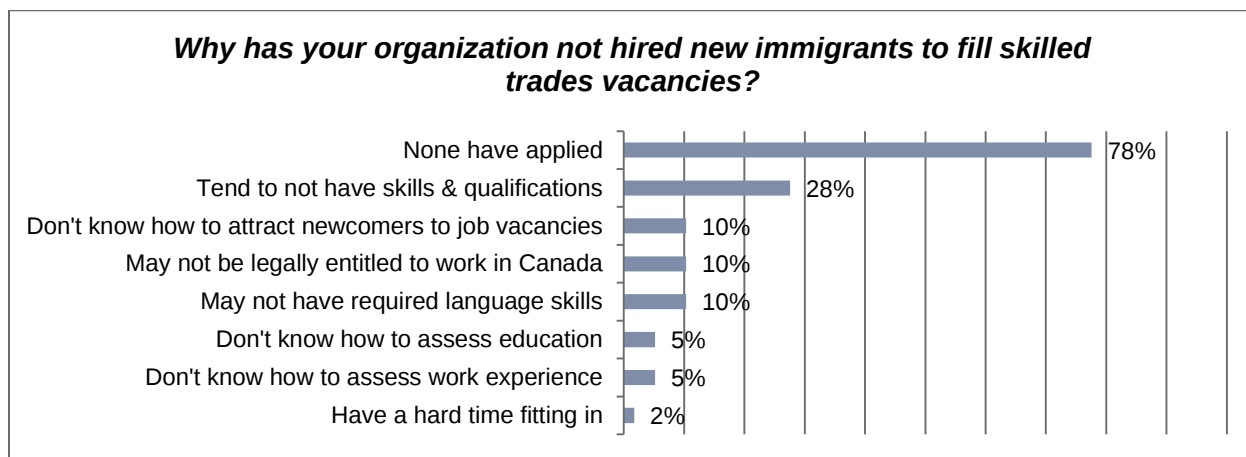
**Figure 14: Survey 2, n=226. Information on the number of organizations that have hired new immigrants (2021)**

Also, employers may lack the awareness that traditional hiring practices can prevent a newcomer from applying. For example, it is common for those seeking employment in the trades to cold-call business places. Since most clients expressed concern about their language level and the ability to communicate their experience clearly to an employer, these traditional practices may prevent newcomers from applying to these vacancies.



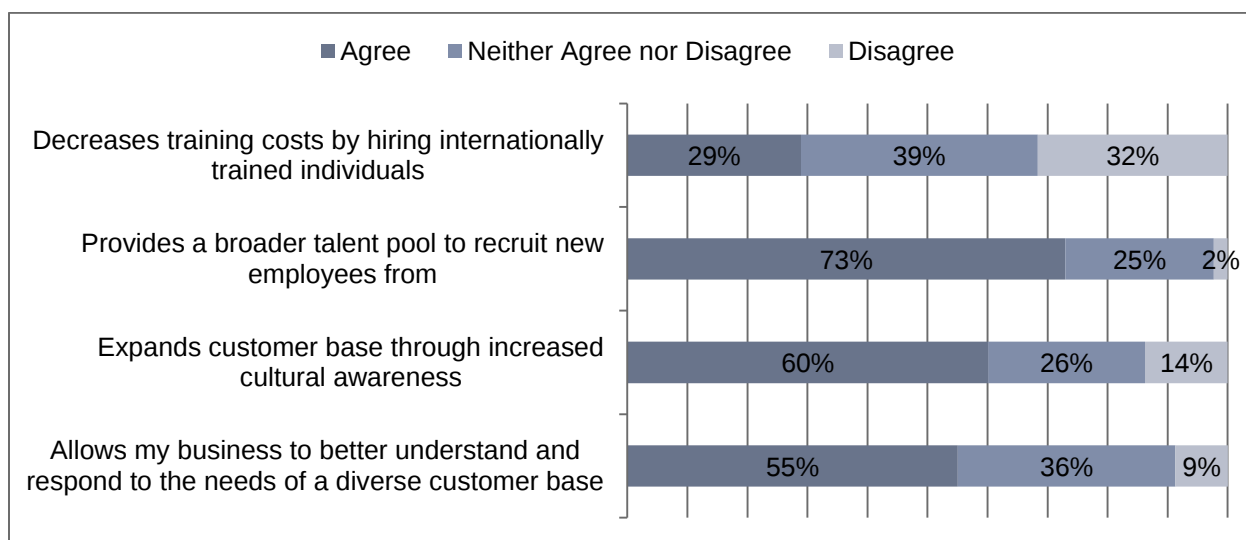
**Figure 15<sup>6</sup>: Survey 1, n=253. Perception of causes that organizations have not hired new immigrants to fill skilled trades vacancies (2019)**

<sup>6</sup> Response rate may be >100% as respondents were asked to check all that applied.



**Figure 16<sup>7</sup>:** Survey 2. n=226. Perception of causes that organizations have not hired new immigrants to fill skilled trades vacancies (2021)

When asked to respond to a series of statements about the value that newcomers bring to a workplace, most employers understood that employing newcomers would expand their customer base and allow the business to better respond to the needs of a diverse customer base. While they saw recruitment as a way to broaden the talent pool, only a minority indicated that they understood that the skills an internationally trained person possessed could decrease their training costs since newcomers would have transferable skills. Figure 17 details these responses.



**Figure 17<sup>8</sup>:** Survey 2. n=226. Employer perception of value that new immigrants bring to their workplace

<sup>7</sup> Total response rate may be >100% as respondents could select more than one option

<sup>8</sup> Employers were asked to agree/disagree with this series of statements about the value that new immigrants bring to their organizations.

Employers may experience a lack of information about integrating newcomers into their workplace. Settlement service providers can coach employers who want to understand how to hire motivated and skilled newcomers. One thing that newcomers love to hear from employers is "willing to train."

### Employer Expectations of Skills and Qualifications

TTL asked why more newcomers haven't been hired to understand an employer's expectations of the skills and qualifications that a newcomer can offer. The most frequent responses, "none have applied," have been discussed earlier. Results are detailed in figures 15 and 16. Although most employers believe that newcomers are an essential source of labour for their organization, 13% of respondents in survey 1 and 28% in survey 2 reported that newcomers might not have the needed skills and qualifications. When probed, employers stated that internationally acquired trades experience might not be relevant in Canada. For example, Canadian residential construction uses wood framing, whereas other countries may use concrete.

Traditionally employment training programs have focused on technical skill development, and there appears to be a mismatch between the skills employers need and those that a job-seeker possesses. This is reflected in the responses shown that indicate employers believe newcomers may not have the skills and qualifications necessary for the job. To ensure that programs deliver in-demand skills training, it is recommended that funders require service providers to convene advisory committees with employer representation to ensure that skill-development meets the current labour market in-demand needs.

In survey 2, respondents were asked if they could evaluate internationally acquired work experience. Although the response rate to this

#### **PROMISING PRACTICE: ADVISORY COMMITTEES THAT INCLUDE EMPLOYER REPRESENTATION CREATES BETTER SKILL DEVELOPMENT**

For each funded employment-related training program, convene advisory committees where the employer can participate in curriculum development that reflects in-demand skills to meet current labour market demand.

It is essential to seek employer representation by recruiting members who have the knowledge, skills and experience related to the trade that the program(s) serve.

Service provider staff should serve as a resource for these committees and refrain from making assumptions about skills needed.

Advisory committees should meet twice per year for the duration of the program. Program staff should be flexible in adapting program content to reflect changing labour market needs.

answer option was low, it shows that employers are beginning to realize that they need to expand their capacity in this area. During the employer-focused interviews conducted as a follow-up to the first survey, all employers in that group stated that they did not require Canadian experience. Some required previous experience, but not necessarily in Canada. Others said that no experience was needed. Several of them referred to workplace training once people were hired or to probation periods.

Since apprenticeship training and assessment is competency-based, a cohesive evaluation of international skills and qualifications is recommended for the future.

A high school diploma is a requirement for a formal apprenticeship in Ontario. To sign a training agreement, the apprentice must possess an OSSD. There are specific trades where there is an exception to this. For instance, General Carpentry requires a grade 10 education. As is well-documented, the points system has ensured that newcomers approved for immigration are highly educated. External data indicates that more than half of the newcomers arriving in Ontario have some form of post-secondary education. Proving secondary education may be more problematic for recent immigrants entering the skilled trades since it is more common for educational assessment services to focus on post-secondary. However, Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition programs can provide a pathway to assist in proving secondary school equivalencies. Providing support to employers to help entry-level hires verify this credential could be coordinated by settlement service providers and local school boards.

It is a common perception that new immigrants will not have acquired language proficiency to allow them to function in the workplace, and some employers perceive "fit" might be an issue. Employers offer one side of this perception, but newcomers also express hesitancy that their language proficiency will enable them to enter the workforce. Workplace mentorship programs can include a component of language training. Language fluency may not be encompassing the entire issue surrounding proficiency.

**PROMISING PRACTICE: PARTNER TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PATHWAYS TO EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

Training providers should partner with local school boards to provide opportunities for newcomers to participate in Prior Learning Assessments and Recognition (PLAR). PLAR assessment and recognition will allow clients the opportunity to earn up to 16 high school credits. This facilitates the client's ability to obtain the necessary high school education credential required for formal apprenticeships.

Encouraging employers to attend cross-cultural competency training such as Hire Immigrants Ottawa's Cross-Cultural Competency (HIO) training program may help employers better understand the intersection between cultural barriers and language. What may appear to be a problem with proficiency can be a cultural misunderstanding in communication styles.

Trades Talent Link undertook designing and delivering cultural competency training focused on skilled trades employers in year 2. Informed by the first survey findings, employer interviews and client focus groups, much investigation and thought were put into this pilot program's content. Initially delivered in-person and transitioned to asynchronous virtual delivery, the focus was not on cross-cultural competency. In Ottawa, HIO provides best-in-class cross-cultural competency training, and project staff wanted to avoid duplicating HIO's offering. The team identified hiring practices as an area to strengthen employer understanding.

The training was initially delivered in-person and transitioned to asynchronous virtual delivery. In interviews, there was a clear preference for self-guided, online delivery. It was important that the training was designed in interactive modules that could be completed within a short timeframe. TTL designed four courses, each with three modules. The modules took 15-20 minutes to complete.

As evidence supported hiring practices as a barrier, the team created an exercise where employers reviewed a current job posting found on Canada's job bank. The team presented the job posting with explanations of barriers that the commonly used language could create.

Employers were consistently surprised that common language in a Canadian job posting would prevent a new immigrant from applying. For example, typically, a Canadian job posting will ask that the job-seeker prove that they have a specific number of years of experience. Most new immigrants will interpret that as meaning the employer is looking for a particular number of years of Canadian work experience. Since TTL's research findings indicate that Canadian experience is not always required by an employer so long as the job-seeker has some transferable skills, coaching employers to become more aware of these types of issues could increase the number of newcomers applying to vacancies.

The coaching delivered by TTL was successful in raising awareness. However, the pilot program was small. It is recommended that this type of coaching be expanded, and a more extensive pilot run.

### Employer Information of Needed Supports to Attract, Hire and Retain Newcomers

To provide clarity around helpful supports for employers, the first survey asked, *If you were to hire a new immigrant in the future, what would be useful to help this hire be successful (success can be measured in that the person became a productive team member)?*. Respondents were asked to check all that apply, but the answer choices were not ranked. Figure 14 shows the responses for employers who had previously hired newcomers and those who had not.

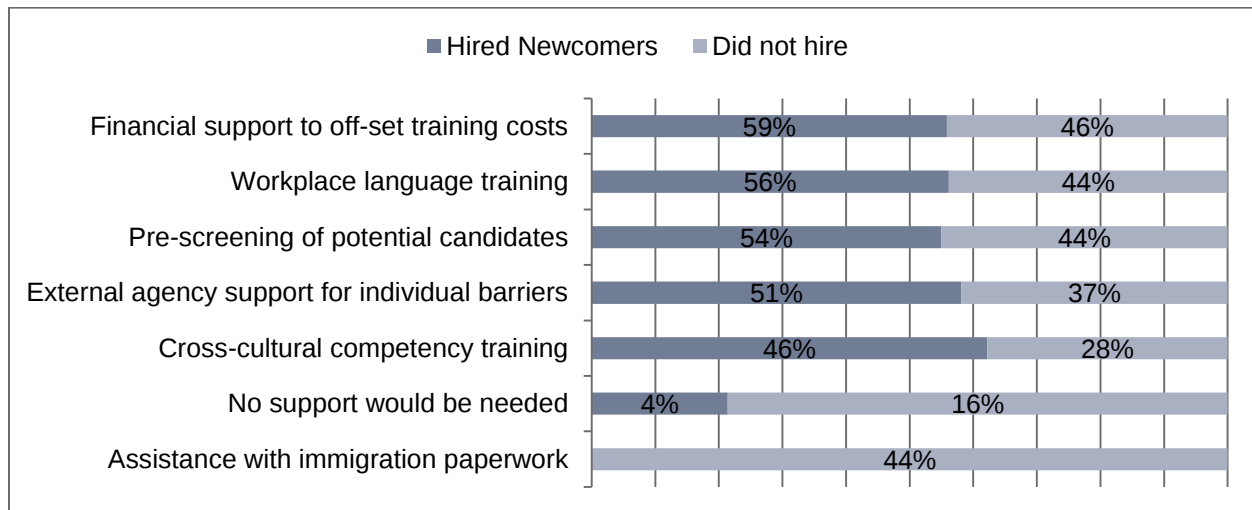


Figure 18<sup>9</sup>: Survey 1, n=253. Employer perception of helpful supports when hiring new immigrants

The difference in the responses between those who had previously hired a new immigrant and those who had not was informative. This would indicate that those who have hired are better positioned to understand the needs of a newcomer's economic integration. Their opinion is formed through expectation rather than perception. Of particular interest is the difference in response rates for cross-cultural competency training. There is merit to the idea that developing intercultural communications resources would benefit employers and increase access to jobs by new immigrants through mutual understanding. When probed, employers who had hired newcomers frequently expressed that many communication misunderstandings are cultural rather than lack of language proficiency. This seems to demonstrate that employers are willing to assume some responsibility for workplace "fit" and welcome access to resources to increase their cultural competencies.

<sup>9</sup> The response rate may be >100% since respondents could select more than one option.

Pre-screening of candidates is frequently appreciated as support. Skilled trades employers are likely to be small businesses where the owner is also the hiring manager. Pre-screening candidates and presenting those whom the service provider sees as a good fit is advantageous to small owner-operated organizations where there is no support from a human resources department. An advantage to agency intervention at the screening level is that those working in settlement services are best positioned to explain equivalencies to the employer to ensure understanding.

External agency support is significant to those employers who had previously hired new immigrants. External agencies can provide that support by assisting with acquiring a driver's license, obtaining reliable childcare and obtaining an assessment for equivalency of qualifications. This supports the newcomer perspective that they often spend significant time going from agency to agency in search of these supports. In the focus groups, a frequent observation was that many Y program participants had heard about the Y's programming by word of mouth through their communities.

All expressed that they'd wished they'd received this information sooner. Regional help desks could provide a clearinghouse to disperse concise information concerning available supports and programming to both employers and newcomers. Information should be delivered in areas where newcomers tend to congregate. Help desks would relieve the burden on settlement service providers to continually undertake environmental scans on an individual basis. Additionally, regional help desks could be well-positioned to assist new immigrants, particularly refugees, in replacing or substituting lost documents. Local Immigration Partnerships are well-positioned to staff and service these help desks.

**PROMISING PRACTICE: DEVELOP DEEPER RELATIONSHIPS THAT RESPECT AN EMPLOYER'S NEEDS**

Service providers should actively listen to the needs of the employer rather than tell the employer what services are offered. While contracts with funders are primarily performance-based and weighted toward the number of clients who receive jobs, recognize that part of achieving those targets is listening to employer needs to develop deeper partnerships.

Develop partnerships with employers and centrally track activity related to that employer. Avoid multiple contacts from different service areas and staff. All too frequently, employers state that they find employment services to be fragmented with lots of duplication, and this leads to frustration and a lack of willingness to engage in forming lasting relationships.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

The recommendations made are based on Trades Talent Link's findings after evaluating all sources of data collected and evolve from the interpretation of lessons learned through the data. Recommendations were organized to reflect client need around economic integration, skills and qualifications and language acquisition to secure employment in the skilled trades and categorized by stakeholder.

|             | NEWCOMERS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | EMPLOYERS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | SETTLEMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS, REGULATORS AND EDUCATORS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| INTEGRATION | <p>Coordinate settlement and employment services for better information sharing, ensuring "no wrong door" for newcomers. Create regional helpdesks through the LIPs to ensure clients can obtain accurate information quickly and avoid costly delays in integration.</p> <p>To assist in workplace integration and employment retention, design mentorship programs that allow for shared experiences between the mentor and mentee. Mentorship programs should focus on integration and retention, whereas existing mentorship may concentrate on job acquisition.</p> <p>Provide funding for</p> | <p>Provide continuous coaching and training opportunities for employers who want to understand how to hire motivated and skilled newcomers.</p> <p>Provide on-going support to employers to assist in onboarding newcomers to the crew and to assist in integration once on-the-job.</p> | <p>Provide funding pathways that allow for collaboration and co-facilitation of programming between stakeholders. Agencies possess expertise in different areas, and partnership allows for capacity-building within the community to better serve the client.</p> <p>Create programs that assign agencies with trades expertise to support all settlement agencies in increasing their capacity to understand employment pathways and labour market need within the Skilled Trades sectors.</p> <p>Reach out with information to where newcomers are, e.g. ESL classes, newcomer groups on social media. Many newcomers stated they had heard about the</p> |



|                                        | <b>NEWCOMERS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>EMPLOYERS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>SETTLEMENT<br/>SERVICE<br/>PROVIDERS,<br/>REGULATORS AND<br/>EDUCATORS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                        | child care and transportation during training programs. Clients frequently mention challenges in finding appropriate and affordable child care or flexible transportation that allows them to attend programming.                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | programs by word of mouth and wished they had found this information earlier.<br><br>Assist in the replacement or substitution for lost documents, e.g. education certificates. Refugees, in particular, may have lost their documents and not have any way of replacing them. Provide acceptable and easily obtainable alternatives to proof of education or experience for those that have insurmountable obstacles to locating this information. |
| <b>SKILLS &amp;<br/>QUALIFICATIONS</b> | Continue to provide paid work placements as a component of all career development programming. Consider funding extended placement periods. This has enormous benefits since newcomers often struggle to get work because of a lack of Canadian experience. A work placement, primarily when supported by program staff, helps newcomers | Ensure employers participate in advisory groups and working tables to provide meaningful employment solutions from the employer's perspective. There is a need for employers to articulate what skills, qualifications, and suitability they require in hires.<br><br>Fund employer-focused supports to assist employers in | Lessen the responsibility of the newcomer to flex and adapt to the needs of the Canadian workplace. Increase the capacity to assist in adaptation and integration through settlement serving agencies working in cooperation with employers to create clear pathways to success for skilled newcomers.                                                                                                                                              |

|                             | <b>NEWCOMERS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>EMPLOYERS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | <b>SETTLEMENT SERVICE PROVIDERS, REGULATORS AND EDUCATORS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                             | <p>develop employers' valued soft skills and learn Canadian workplace culture, including health and safety.</p> <p>Encourage newcomers attending career-development programming to pro-actively identify suitable placement opportunities and support the trainee by providing job-development services with experienced employment professionals through instruction on writing a Canadian-style resume, interview techniques and soft skills development opportunities.</p> <p>During training programs, offer opportunities to demonstrate entrepreneurial opportunities to newcomers looking to enter the trades.</p> | <p>determining qualifications, skills and suitability; translation of documentation, assessment of credentials, occupation-specific language training, orientation to the Canadian workplace, along with targeted outreach campaigns to dissolve confusion and misunderstanding of available services.</p> | <p>Facilitate staff site visits and monitoring of work placements to allow for early intervention when problems arise and coaching opportunities related to soft skill development. Service providers can act as cultural facilitators through their experience working with both employers and newcomers.</p> |
| <b>LANGUAGE ACQUISITION</b> | <p>Provide access to occupation-specific language acquisition programs and allows for the development of language on the job</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <p>Coach employers to increase their understanding of the Canadian Language Benchmark system and minimum levels</p>                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |



|  | <b>NEWCOMERS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | <b>EMPLOYERS</b>                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>SETTLEMENT<br/>SERVICE<br/>PROVIDERS,<br/>REGULATORS AND<br/>EDUCATORS</b> |
|--|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <p>and in the context of the chosen trade or sector.</p> <p>Recognize that francophone newcomers have special language acquisition needs. Though they may be fluent in one official language, they need English to be more employable.</p> <p>Recognize the importance of providing health and safety training to newcomers in their first languages through increasing the capacity of health and safety trainers to support these programs. While English language proficiency may be at a level of suitability for the workplace, the newcomer must have complete understanding of the health and safety training.</p> | <p>required for immigration and career-development programming. Increase employer knowledge of language training offered to newcomers and fund occupation-specific language programming in the workplace.</p> |                                                                               |

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## **APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY**

### **Thematic Framework**

To organize and manage data collection to ensure consistent analysis and to demonstrate rigour and trustworthiness, the project team used a thematic framework approach for collecting and analyzing data (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009). The framework approach is commonly used in evaluation projects that include a qualitative approach. It can be applied to various data collection methods such as focus groups, observational data and interviews. The framework allowed the team to use a consistent and systematic approach to managing, analyzing, and identifying themes within the data collected (Hackett & Strickland, 2018).

Trades Talent Link project staff selected four themes; motivation, perception, expectation and information. These themes were selected based on the Y NCR's experiences working with newcomers, community agencies and skilled trades employers. All project activities were designed, delivered and analyzed through the lens of these four factors believed to influence a newcomer's absorption and integration into the Canadian labour market, particularly into the skilled trades.

Using this framework, the project team analyzed the impact of these four factors on the primary stakeholders – newcomers and skilled trades employers-and the effects on delivering the Y's existing skilled trades programs and services.

#### **Motivation**

Motivation is an essential component in achieving success. It stimulates individuals to transform their abilities into achievements. Those who are motivated to achieve a goal are being moved to action. Motivation provides purpose and direction to behaviours at a conscious or unconscious level. It is one's willingness to exert effort in pursuit of goals. When considering career development, motivation can include salary/benefits, desire to achieve status or recognition of one's skills, a sense of achievement, positive relationships with colleagues and a feeling that the work is valuable or essential.

#### **Perception**

Perception is the process or result of becoming aware of relationships, events, or objects through senses and activities by recognizing, observing, and distinguishing the importance of these. These activities enable individuals to organize and interpret messages received into meaningful knowledge and act in a coordinated manner (American Psychology Association, 2018).

An individual's perception can influence their attitudes, motives, interests, experience, and expectations in the workplace. Perception can influence stereotyping – the tendency to judge someone based on the group they belong to. Individuals may project characteristics on other people based on past experiences with that demographic group.



## Expectation

Expectation is defined as believing that a thing will happen or should be a certain way (American Psychology Association, 2018).

In the context of Trades Talent Link, expectation refers to expectations related to the Canadian workplace culture. The majority of newcomers have experienced a more hierarchical workplace culture in their past. They have become accustomed to their managers providing detailed direction and directly influencing an employee's day-to-day activities. In contrast, Canadian managers expect a degree of autonomy and that employees are proactive in finding solutions to problems, have well-developed soft skills – a strong work ethic, integrity, ability to work in a team and motivate their co-workers, flexibility, a positive attitude, strong time management, excellent presentation and communication skills.

## Information

Information is defined as facts, knowledge, and skills acquired by individuals through their experiences or education. This knowledge can be gained through awareness or familiarity gained by experience of a fact or situation (American Psychology Association, 2018).

In Trades Talent Link's context, the project team viewed demographic information within this framework category.

## Data Collection

The Trades Talent Link (TTL) project undertook longitudinal and cross-sectional primary research to understand barriers/gaps and inform systemic change to increase accessibility to skilled trades for newcomers/refugees.

## Focus Groups

Focus groups were held with most cohorts of the Y NCR's employment training programs -- Power of Trades and Pre-Apprenticeships -- between 2018 and 2021 near each program's end and a small sample of Individual Consultation clients. Social Planning Council of Ottawa staff facilitated the focus groups, and the results were shared with program managers. All participants were asked the same questions relating to the four factors. The focus groups were an integral part of this project as community-based research, in which those whose lives are affected by the issue being studied must be involved. (Taylor & Ochocka, p.185) All of the participants in the focus groups were either looking for work in the trades or, at a minimum, had considered this possibility.

Seventeen (17) focus groups were held with a total of 147 participants, all of whom were or had been clients of the Y's pre-employment programs in the skilled trades. The most significant number (64%) of focus group participants were current or past participants in the Power of Trades program. Twenty-eight percent (28%) were in the Home Renovation Pre-Apprenticeship program. The rest were in the Horticulture Pre-Apprenticeship program (5%) or had received Individual Consultation services (3%).

The focus group questions followed the project's thematic framework. The same questions were asked of each group as much as possible. The order and wording of the questions varied slightly to be relevant to the participants' specific circumstances (e.g. whether they were currently in a program at the Y or not). Not all questions were asked in each group due to time constraints.

One 2-part question was added in 2019 to increase the understanding of the expectations and challenges for newcomers.

**Table 3: Trades Talent Link Years 1 to 3 Focus Group Participation**

| Date           |    | Program                                  | # of participants |
|----------------|----|------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <i>2018-19</i> |    |                                          |                   |
| Sept. 4, 2018  | 1  | Pre-apprenticeship – Home Renovation     | 10                |
| Sept. 19, 2018 | 2  | Power of Trades                          | 6                 |
| Nov. 5, 2018   | 3  | Power of Trades alumni (bilingual)       | 11                |
| Feb. 26, 2019  | 4  | Individual consultation clients          | 3                 |
| Feb. 27, 2019  | 5  | Power of Trades                          | 13                |
| Mar. 7, 2019   | 6  | Individual consultation clients (French) | 2                 |
| Mar. 25, 2019  | 7  | Pre-apprenticeship – Home Renovation     | 3                 |
| <i>2019-20</i> |    |                                          |                   |
| May 16, 2019   | 8  | Power of Trades (French)                 | 7                 |
| Aug 8, 2019    | 9  | Pre-apprenticeship – Horticulture        | 5                 |
| Aug 26, 2019   | 10 | Pre-apprenticeship – Home Renovation     | 10                |
| Oct 23, 2019   | 11 | Power of Trades                          | 12                |
| March 4, 2020  | 12 | Power of Trades                          | 14                |
| <i>2020-21</i> |    |                                          |                   |
| July 29, 2020  | 13 | Pre-apprenticeship – Horticulture        | 2                 |
| Aug 25, 2020   | 14 | Power of Trades (French)                 | 10                |
| Nov 5, 2020    | 15 | Power of Trades                          | 9                 |
| Feb 2, 2021    | 16 | Pre-apprenticeship – Home Renovation     | 18                |
| Mar. 4, 2021   | 17 | Power of Trades                          | 12                |
| <b>Total</b>   |    |                                          | <b>147</b>        |

### Employer Survey

The employer engagement survey conducted once in Year 1 (n=253) and once in Year 3 (n=226) examined employer engagement, including attitudes and perceptions towards attracting, hiring, and retaining immigrants as a significant labour source to help fill the growing labour market shortages. This survey will provide empirical evidence intended to enhance existing client-facing programs and create new programs that positively respond to community needs.

- In Year 1, 253 completed surveys were obtained with a response rate of 20%. Table 4 details the margin of error.
- In Year 2, 226 completed surveys were obtained with a response rate of 15%. Table 4 details the margin of error.

This survey was designed to:

- Assess employer knowledge of the Ontario apprenticeship system
- Measure employer understanding of regulatory bodies related to Ontario's skilled trades
- Investigate employer hiring practices associated with a formal apprenticeship
- Explore employer hiring practices related to the immigrant workforce
- Examine employers' knowledge of the foreign qualification recognition processes (trades equivalency assessment)

**Table 4: Margins of Error, Employer Survey, Year 1 and Year 3**

| Industry Sector | Year 1 Completed Surveys | Year 1 Margin of Error <sup>10</sup> | Year 3 Completed Surveys | Year 3 Margin of Error <sup>1</sup> |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Construction    | 152                      | ±4.9%                                | 116                      | ±6.5%                               |
| Service         | 57                       | ±5.2%                                | 58                       | ±5.1%                               |
| Motive Power    | 51                       | ±5.0%                                | 43                       | ±3.7%                               |
| Industrial      | 29                       | ±4.0%                                | 20                       | ±5.7%                               |

### **Sample Development**

Statistics Canada "Survey Methods and Practices" was used to ensure that survey design, data collection, cleaning, coding, editing, and analysis adhered to best practices and provided rigour.

Data sources used to prepare the survey sample for the Trades Talent Link Employer Survey included:

- Business listings for Ottawa trades employers with whom the YMCA-YWCA of the National Capital Region has a pre-existing relationship
- A list of survey completions from the Immigrants in Trades Awareness Program (ITAP)
- Business listings for Ottawa employers provided by InfoCanada market research located in postal codes K1B, K1C, K1E, K1G, K1H, K1J, K1K, K1L, K1M, K1N, K1P, K1R, K1S, K1T, K1V, K1W, K1X, K1Y, K1Z, K2A, K2B, K2C, K2E, K2G, K2H, K2J, K2K, K2L, K2M, K2P, K2R, K2S, K2T, K2V, K2W, K4A, K4B, K4C, K4M, K4P

Sample preparation was completed by cross-referencing all lists against the InfoCanada market research list(s), combining information, removing duplicates and correcting/reformatting address information.

<sup>10</sup> At the 95% confidence interval. An acceptable margin of error used by most researchers typically falls between 4% and 8% at the 95% confidence level. It is affected by sample size, population size, and percentage.



### **Sample Stratification**

Survey administration was completed using a weighted random sample.

In Ontario, trades are categorized into four sectors: Construction, Motive Power, Industrial and Service. To set the sample stratification, information was gathered from Ottawa Employment Hub labour market information (LMI). This information was then used to provide an approximate total for the number of businesses potentially employing skilled trades workers. This information was used to give an approximate proportional representation of employers in each of the four sectors. Of the 2000 total records provided by InfoCanada included 650 in the Construction sector, 550 in the Service sector, 450 in the Motive Power sector and 350 in the Industrial sector.

The target population included employers classified in the following sub-sectors based on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes:

#### **SUBSECTOR NAICS 236 - Construction of buildings**

- 2361 Residential building construction
- 2362 Non-residential building construction

#### **SUBSECTOR NAICS 237 - Heavy and civil engineering construction**

- 2371 Utility system construction
- 2372 Land subdivision
- 2373 Highway, street and bridge construction
- 2379 Other heavy and civil engineering construction

#### **SUBSECTOR NAICS 238 - Specialty trade contractors**

- 2381 Foundation, structure, and building exterior contractors
- 2382 Building equipment contractors
- 2382 Building finishing contractors
- 2389 Other specialty trade contractors

#### **SUBSECTOR NAICS 811 – Repair and maintenance**

- 8111 Automotive repair and maintenance
- 8112 Electronic and precision equipment repair and maintenance
- 8113 Commercial and industrial machinery and equipment (except automotive and electronic) repair and maintenance
- 8114 Personal and household goods repair and maintenance

#### **SUBSECTOR NAICS 722 - Food services and drinking places**

- 7223 Special food services
- 7225 Full-service restaurants and limited-service eating places

### **Questionnaire**

The survey questionnaire was transcribed to SurveyMonkey to collect data by telephone interview or self-enumeration to maximize survey response rates.

**Field Testing**

Before deployment, employers representing a cross-section of the skilled trades sectors were engaged to test the questionnaire for completeness, interpretation and question ordering. Project staff responded to identified issues or feedback, and the questionnaire was strengthened.

**Quality Control and Quality Assurance**

The Trades Talent Link survey methodology was peer-reviewed before deployment. Project staff consulted with the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, the Local Employment Planning Council and Hire Immigrants Ottawa to discuss their best practices related to similar survey activities.

Before deployment, project staff designed and delivered training for interviewers. The purpose of this training was to provide general project information, explain the interviewer's role in the larger context of the project, explain methods related to administering the survey, provide strategies to improve response rates and provide suggestions related to effective communication strategies. An opportunity was provided to interviewers to meet and share best practices to increase their confidence and aid in response rates.

**Survey Administration**

Survey administration used either interviewer-assisted or self-enumeration methods, with the vast majority of the sample population contacted through interviewer-assisted methods. Further, allowing for a combination of collection methods helped improve response rates, reduced response errors, and helped ensure that deadlines were met. Interview-assisted methods allowed interviewers to personalize the interview and survey concepts. Interviewers were able to reduce response errors and item non-responses by identifying these errors at the interview time and correcting them in the respondent's presence.

**Education Seminars**

This activity aimed to introduce newcomers to Ontario's skilled trades and included information related to regulations, apprenticeship/ foreign experience recognition processes, labour market, and service provider information.

Seminars were held, at a minimum, twice per month and delivered to clients of settlement, language, education and employment service providers. Pre/post surveys were used to check for a shift in attitude towards jobs in the skilled trades and measure a client's perceived change in understanding of skilled trades opportunities. The pre/post surveys provided statements related to career knowledge, and clients' were asked to record their perception of change in learning using a Likert scale.

During Year 2, project staff developed and hosted a webinar, using the existing educational seminar's content "Accessing good jobs in the skilled trades." The targeted audience was newcomer job seekers in Ottawa as well as pre-arrival service clients.



| Year              | Number of events | Target Output | Achieved    |
|-------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Year 1: 2018-2019 | 40               | 250           | 274         |
| Year 2: 2019-2020 | 40               | 375           | 605         |
| Year 3: 2020-2021 | 40               | 375           | 321         |
| <b>Total:</b>     | <b>160</b>       | <b>1000</b>   | <b>1200</b> |

| Number of feedback forms collected % of the total attendees |                | FY1 | FY2 | FY3                                                                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----|-----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                             |                | 41% | 39% | 32%                                                                                            |
| Gender                                                      | Men            | 23% | 46% | Pivot to virtual delivery meant this information was not collected because of privacy concerns |
|                                                             | Women          | 39% | 45% |                                                                                                |
|                                                             | Didn't provide | 37% | 7%  |                                                                                                |
| Age                                                         | 13-17          | 5%  | 1%  |                                                                                                |
|                                                             | 18-29          | 13% | 15% |                                                                                                |
|                                                             | 30-54          | 26% | 52% |                                                                                                |
|                                                             | 65+            | 5%  | 2%  |                                                                                                |
|                                                             | Didn't provide | 26% | 15% |                                                                                                |

### Mentorship Pilot

TTL staff at the Y recruited 17 mentors between November 2019 and March 2020; 3 of them dropped out before a match was made. They also recruited 19 mentees, 2 of whom dropped out.

Fifteen matches were made between January 28, 2020, and March 5, 2020. Most mentors were paired with one mentee; one mentor was matched with two mentees. All the mentors and mentees were men, reflecting the predominance of men in the Y's skilled trades programs.

The original intention was to have five mentees from each of the three programs (Home Renovation, Power of Trades and Horticulture), but Horticulture graduates showed less interest in mentorship at this time, and some graduates had decided not to pursue Horticulture as a career.

The objective of matching mentors and mentees from the same program was primarily achieved, with 10 of the 15 matches being from the same program. It was not possible to recruit mentors from the Horticulture Pre-Apprenticeship program since the program had only started in 2019, so there were no graduates from earlier years. The two Horticulture mentees were matched with mentors from Power of Trades. Three of the Power of Trades mentees were matched with mentors from the Home Renovation Pre-Apprenticeship program, which was appropriate considering that it would be expected that Pre-Apprenticeship graduates would be more advanced in their career path in the trades than Power of Trades graduates.

**Matches by program**

| Number of matches | Mentor          | Mentee          |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| 6                 | Home Renovation | Home Renovation |
| 4                 | Power of Trades | Power of Trades |
| 3                 | Home Renovation | Power of Trades |
| 2                 | Power of Trades | Horticulture    |
| <b>Total = 15</b> |                 |                 |

OCISO staff was responsible for orientation and training for both mentors and mentees. Each mentorship pair had a matching session with the Mentorship Facilitator, either in person, via phone or by email. Also, both mentors and mentees were invited to group orientation sessions, which most attended. Those who could not participate in the group orientation received orientation either by phone, online or (for mentees) at a Peer Circle workshop.

Two other Peer Circles were offered, one for mentees on the topic of networking in March and another open to both mentors and mentees in June on coping with the COVID situation.

**External Project Evaluator**

To implement an independent third-party evaluation framework analyzing the effectiveness of each component of the Trades Talent Link project and thereby ensuring rigour, the Y NCR entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Social Planning Council of Ottawa (SPCO) from 2018 to 2021.

The SPCO takes a holistic approach to community development by integrating research, planning and community building. The evaluation approach balanced utilization-focused evaluation with the Y NCR's resource constraints as a non-profit service delivery organization.

**Project Staff Reflective Practice**

Reflective practice was used as a qualitative data collection method and a continuous learning and development tool for the project team. In doing so, the team was able to incorporate observational data gathered from project activities. Observational data is used when researchers are trying to understand an ongoing process or situation, are gathering information on interactions between individuals or individual behaviours and drawing conclusions about a population when researchers cannot control the treatment or independent variable.

Based on Gibb's Reflective Cycle model providing structure for learning from experience, the method included the following six stages to examine recent experience:

- Description of the experience
- Feelings and thoughts about the experience
- Evaluation of the experience, both good and bad
- Analysis to make sense of the situation
- Conclusion about what you learned and what you could have done differently
- Action plan for how you would deal with similar situations in the future or general changes you might find appropriate.



This method has proven effective while analyzing new complex or challenging situations to develop an action plan or recommend a new approach and later formulate best practices.

## **Ethics**

### **YMCA-YWCA of the National Capital Region Privacy Statement**

The YMCA-YWCA is committed to protecting personal information by following responsible information handling practices in keeping with privacy laws. The YMCA-YWCA maintains physical, electronic and administrative safeguards appropriate to the type of personal data obtained. YMCA-YWCA staff and volunteers having access to personal data are required to respect the confidentiality of personal information and handle it responsibly.

The YMCA-YWCA does not sell personal information collected, nor is personal information disclosed without prior knowledge or consent, except when required by a government body or agency or as permitted by Law.

The YMCA-YWCA regularly reviews its policies and procedures to ensure currency with changing laws and evolving public expectations.

### **Education Seminars**

Program staff collected attendee personal information after each information session. Each printed form contained a privacy statement. The provision of personal information was voluntary, and all personal information was confidential. See appendix.

### **Focus Groups**

The Y NCR collects demographic information from clients as they register for programming. All clients are required to sign a waiver "Confidentiality and Consent to Exchange Information Agreement" when registering for programs. The Y NCR does not release information that could identify individual clients. This agreement bound trades Talent Link staff, and all information collected did not include personal identifying information. See appendix.

### **Employer Survey**

A statement of confidentiality was read to each participant before beginning the telephone survey. The text of the statement is as follows:

*All the information you provide will be treated as confidential and individual results will not be disclosed to any other organization. The names of individuals responding to the survey will be anonymous. However, the name of your company may be used by Y staff in their analysis of survey responses. Your company name will not be disclosed to any other organization.*

Respondents could voluntarily provide contact information at specific points during the survey. Where the respondent requested follow-up from Y NCR program staff, this information was

filtered and supplied to the relevant program director. This information was treated as confidential and did not link the individuals to their responses.

### Limitations of Study

The environmental scan is not exhaustive. While studies related to the problems associated with newcomers' economic integration are wide-ranging, it is impossible to review all existing studies. The literature reviewed was limited to studies that discussed the key barriers to newcomers' labour market attachment and those examining the labour market shortages experienced by the skilled trades sectors.

While every effort was made to ensure randomized sampling, selection bias may be present as some interviewers selected organizations or individuals with whom they had an existing relationship. Non-response may also introduce bias into the sample selection.

Because of the study's timeframe, tracking participants' medium-term and long-term outcomes, as shown in the results chain, was not possible.

The mentorship pilot project was of a small scale and short timeline; therefore, the evaluation focused on implementation rather than outcomes. The expected short-term outcomes were modest due to the limited size and duration of the program.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted Trades Talent Link activities beginning in March 2020 and continuing throughout 2021. Project staff reported that it was increasingly challenging to engage stakeholders, particularly in the face of 2 province-wide economic shutdowns ordered by the province of Ontario in 2020, the first on March 15<sup>th</sup> and the second on December 26<sup>th</sup>. For example:

- At the time of the March 15 lockdown, although the mentor-mentee relationships had been established and the mentorship facilitator continued to work with the mentors and mentees by moving activities online, most mentor-mentee pairs stopped communicating.
- The employer survey began during the Fall of 2020 and continued through to early Winter 2021. Interviewers noted that starting with the economic shutdown announcement in late December, employers were increasingly disengaged with responding to the survey. Many cited stressors around the operation of their businesses as the reason for the disengagement.
- While registration numbers indicated positive interest in the Accessing Good Jobs webinar, actual attendance was often  $\leq 10\%$  of registration. While the reason for low attendance was not formally examined as part of the study, the team assumed that Zoom fatigue – burnout from attending a large number of virtual meetings or events -- might be at play.
- An unintended limitation related to low participation from newcomers was the closure of international borders due to COVID-19. It has been well-documented that immigration numbers have fallen from 2020 to writing this report in March 2021.



## **APPENDIX B: YMCA-YWCA of the National Capital Region Employment and Immigrant Services**

The YMCA-YWCA of the National Capital Region has been offering programming to help newcomers access skilled trades since 2011. A pilot project funded by United Way with two staff serving 40 clients per year has evolved into five distinct programs with multiple funders and 17 staff members helping over 200 newcomers per year. The services have developed to meet identified needs in the community and to address gaps in existing services.

Power of Trades offers pre-employment training and support for immigrants and consultation for any job-seeking clients interested in working in the skilled trades. There is no cost to participants who wish to take part in these services. Power of Trades pre-employment training and support is funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, while the United Way supports the consultation service.

During a 6-week session, participants receive information and practical advice about finding and keeping a job in Ontario's skilled trades.

Examples of material covered in training include: understanding the apprenticeship process in Ontario, preparation for the Certificate of Qualification exam, labour laws and regulations in Ontario, understanding what Canadian trades employers look for in a new employee, resume and interview preparation, guest speakers from local industry, and other helpful information and activities.

### **Program Includes:**

- Six weeks of in-class, non-technical training.
- Orientation to skilled trades and apprenticeships.
- Access to in-demand certification (WHMIS, Service Excellence, Working at Heights, First Aid CPR-C).
- Work towards earning your Ontario Secondary School Diploma.
- Three-week work placement.
- Ongoing individualized job search support.

### **Participants Must:**

- Be a permanent resident, convention refugee or live-in caregiver.
- Be an Ontario resident.
- Have a strong interest in the skilled trades
- Available for full-time training and employment.

For those wishing to enter the residential construction trades, the Pre-Apprenticeship in Home Renovation – funded by the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development – provides participants with technical training in combination with workplace preparation and academic upgrading.



The Home Renovation training program provides individuals with the hands-on skills training required to find employment in the residential renovation trades (including carpentry, drywall finishing and plastering, tile setting, and painting). There is no cost to participate.

Program Includes:

- 24 weeks of technical training.
- 8 to 12 weeks of paid work placement.
- Technical, academic, and pre-employment preparation.
- Textbooks, toolkits, and safety equipment.
- Training including First Aid & CPR-C, WHMIS, Working at Heights, Worker Health and Safety Awareness in 4 Steps.
- Access to Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) portfolio review (where applicable).
- The opportunity to earn high school credits towards your Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

Participants Must Be:

- 19+ years of age.
- Proficient in English (Canadian Language Benchmark Level 5, or higher).
- A resident of Ontario.
- Legally entitled to study and work in Canada
- Committed to attending classes on a full-time basis for 24 weeks.

The Horticulture training program offers hands-on technical and pre-employment training to individuals interested in working in the Horticulture trade. The program's trade-specific portion focuses on identifying and cultivating plants, landscaping, and irrigation systems. There is no cost to participate.

Program Includes:

- 10 weeks of technical training.
- 8 to 12 weeks of **paid** work placement.
- Technical, academic, and pre-employment preparation.
- Textbooks, toolkits, and safety equipment.
- First Aid & CPR-C, WHMIS, worker health and safety training.
- Access to Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR).
- The opportunity to earn high school credits towards your Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD).

Participants Must Be:

- 19+ years of age.
- Proficient in English (Canadian Language Benchmark Level 5, or higher).
- A resident of Ontario.
- Legally entitled to study and work in Canada
- Committed to attend classes and work on a full-time basis for 26 weeks.



Both pre-apprenticeship programs also provide employment readiness by providing basic tool kits and safety boots so that participants exit the program "work-ready."

Build ON is an online pre-arrival service funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada. We provide specialized information and orientation about the skilled trades, engineering and construction sectors to new immigrants approved to immigrate to Ontario, Canada. There is no cost to participate\*, and completion is achieved at the participant's own pace.

**Program Includes:**

- **One-on-one Consultations:** We offer one-on-one online consultation sessions where clients will be connected with Employment Consultants and receive personalized consultations on an as-needed basis.
- **Online Training Materials:** We provide access to online workshops and documents that clients can watch and download when convenient. They cover a broad range of topics, including job searching strategies, employment standards, Canadian workplace culture and much more.
- **Live and On-demand Webinars:** We provide webinars to our clients on a broad range of related employment and settlement topics in Canada.
- **Connection to Mentors:** If eligible, we offer links to professional mentors working in the same field or a related field within Ontario to support integration into the Canadian workplace.
- **Information on Skilled Trades, Engineering and Construction:** We provide information on the skilled trades, engineering, and construction sectors and the pathways for certification and licensing in Ontario.
- **Access to an Interactive Website:** You get access to free information for all users to better understand and transition to the Canadian workplace and access exclusive content. Registering is quick, easy, and free!

**Participants Must Be:**

- Interested in working in the skilled trades, engineering, or construction sectors in Ontario.
- Approved to come to Canada.
- Currently still residing outside of Canada.
- Planning to settle in Ontario, Canada.



## APPENDIX C: ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN

### Labour Market Information

The Ottawa Business Growth Survey (2017) found that access to skilled labour was the second most pressing concern for Ottawa business (the first was attracting more companies to Ottawa), with 68% of respondents reporting this issue. In the previous two years, one-quarter of Ottawa businesses felt that access to skilled workers had worsened (Ottawa Board of Trade, 2018). A 2018 study by the Business Development Bank (BDC) found that 40% of the small and medium-sized businesses they surveyed were having difficulty hiring new employees. One of the sectors facing the most severe shortages was construction (Cocolakis-Wormstall, 2018). The Manpower Group reported that skilled trade workers had been among the groups that have consistently ranked among the top five most challenging roles for Canadian employers to fill in the past 10 years (Manpower Group, 2018). The Ontario Chamber of Commerce quotes Skills Canada as estimating that 40% of new jobs created in the next decade will be in the skilled trades (Sullivan, 2017).

BuildForce Canada notes that Ontario is grappling with record levels of construction activity and recruiting challenges. Though overall construction activity may not increase in the next decade in Eastern Ontario, they note a steady increase in renovation work, which has implications for the mix of trade and skill requirements. They expect that most recent entrants to the construction industry will be from the local population and aged 30 and younger (Buildforce Canada, 2019). However, to hire enough new people, they conclude that the construction and maintenance industry will need to increase recruitment from traditionally under-represented groups in the current construction labour force, namely women, indigenous Canadians, and newcomers (Buildforce Canada, 2019). Though new Canadians currently account for approximately 26% of Ontario's construction labour force, BuildForce notes that, historically, a key source of immigrants was Europe. They had a higher propensity to choose the construction industry than more recent immigrants from Asia (BuildForce Canada, 2018). This suggests that the construction industry will have to make more effort to recruit newcomers (BuildForce Canada, 2018).

BuildForce noted a dramatic drop in construction employment in Ontario in 2020 because of Covid-19, a decline of 17% between February and April 2020. Though there was a rebound after that, the employment level was still below that of previous years (BuildForce 2020).

The Ottawa Business Growth Survey found that, though 82% of businesses thought that immigrants were an important source of skilled labour, only 43% of companies felt that immigrants were an important source of skilled labour for their own company. This percentage was higher for larger companies, with 65% of companies with more than 150 employees viewing immigrants as an essential source of skilled labour for their own company. Companies which had hired at least one immigrant in the past year were more than twice as likely to say that immigrants were an important source of talent for their business as were employers who had not hired any immigrants in the past year (Ottawa Board of Trade, 2018).

Similarly, the BDC study found that, despite labour shortages, employers were less likely to recruit immigrants than to use other strategies such as hiring less-qualified workers or recruiting younger or retired workers. Only 18% of firms agreed that they would recruit immigrants as a strategy to mitigate labour shortages. In contrast, over 40% said they would hire less-qualified workers or recruit younger workers. Small firms were less likely to recruit immigrants than to use other hiring strategies (Manpower Group, 2018).

The CAF Apprenticeship in Canada ePanel's 2018 survey results showed that, though 76% of pre-apprentices would like to pursue an apprenticeship, finding an employer sponsor is the main obstacle. (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2018).

In 2011, the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) surveyed employers about their perceptions and practices in apprenticeship and apprenticeship training. They found that employers who are familiar with apprenticeship had a very positive perception of it. Of the employers who had journeypersons and who were familiar with apprentices and apprenticeship training, approximately half had apprentices (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2011). The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) argues that creating more opportunities for those currently under-represented in the trades will lead to a more equitable workforce and reduce economic marginalization (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2010).

The 2015 National Apprenticeship Survey (NAS) conducted by Statistics Canada found that the majority of apprentices were under 25 years of age (52.8%), male (86.3%) and Canadian-born (91.3%), while women, immigrants and visible minorities were under-represented. Immigrants accounted for 8.7% of apprentices, less than half their share of the population of Canada. The majority of apprentices (more than 90%) agreed that "Canadians increasingly see trades as a good career option." Besides, more than three-quarters of apprentices either agreed or strongly agreed that trade occupations pay better than other jobs. However, this percentage varied by trade.

The key findings regarding immigrant apprentices were:

- Immigrants comprised 8.7% of NAS apprentices.
- Immigrants were more likely than non-immigrants to register for a program at an older age, at an average age of 31.9 compared to 26.5 for non-immigrants. The majority of non-immigrants had registered before the age of 25.
- Immigrants were less likely than non-immigrants registered in a Red Seal trade (67.6% versus 79.1%).
- Across the top 10 Red Seal trades, immigrants' most common trades were construction electricians, hairstylists, and automotive service technicians. Immigrants were less likely than non-immigrants to be carpenter, steamfitter/pipefitter, plumber or industrial mechanic apprentices.
- One-quarter of immigrant apprentices reported that they had difficulty finding an employer hiring apprentices when they started an apprenticeship; this proportion was higher than for non-immigrants.

- There were no notable differences in immigrant apprentices' employment status and non-immigrant apprentices (Statistics Canada, 2015).

## **Obstacles to Newcomers Entering the Labour Market**

In the Canadian labour market, recognition of foreign-acquired skills, work experience and education is a problem experienced by immigrants, especially in regulated trades and professions. Recently arrived immigrant cohorts, regardless of their place of origin, have not had as much success in the Canadian labour market as earlier immigration cohorts (Wilkinson, et al., 2016), (Blain, et al., December, 2018). However, country of origin does make a difference to employment outcomes, with those from Nigeria, China, Iran, Bangladesh and Egypt reporting lower percentages of employment than arrivals from the Philippines and Brazil. The employment outcomes of racialized minorities and immigrants lag those of non-racialized workers, and immigrant women experience poorer outcomes than immigrant men. Immigrant workers are over-represented in lower-paying sectors such as accommodation and food services (Ng & Gagnon, 2020).

Common barriers encountered by immigrants include lack of Canadian work experience, lack of information about available programs and services, lack of employer contacts and networking opportunities, obstacles related to licensing and accreditation, lack of knowledge of local labour market information and employment opportunities, difficulty accessing language and technical skills upgrading programs, the expense associated with bridging and training programs, and discrimination (Drolet, et al., 2014; Diaz, 2019). From the employer's perspective, challenges for hiring newcomers include language, networking, training, perceived fit, strict requirements, pre-screening, and human resource tools (Drolet et al., 2014; Ng & Gagnon, 2020).

The World Education Services (WES) survey of skilled immigrants found that men were more likely to be employed than women, older respondents were significantly less likely to be employed than the youngest (age 20-29), those who had Canadian experience were more likely to be employed, but employment rates declined as years of international work experience increased, employment rates fell at each successive degree level of education, and survey respondents who reported working previously in a profession that is regulated in Canada were significantly less likely to be working in commensurate employment (WES, 2019).

Participants in the September 2017 Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF) regional roundtable in Calgary identified four significant barriers with which newcomers struggle: communication barriers, financial capacity, mental health/stress and a lack of awareness about available supports. Communication skills included language and knowing how to present themselves to an employer, navigate the workplace's cultural hierarchy and understand their rights as workers (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2017). The CCPI, in addition to these barriers, identified a low level of education, being part of a visible minority or racialized, having family responsibilities, or being a woman as other obstacles for newcomers in the labour market (Blain, et al., December, 2018).

The National Apprenticeship Survey (NAS) also found that family issues were a factor for newcomers. The most common reason immigrants not completing an apprenticeship was

"personal or family issues" (15.3%); they were more likely than non-immigrants to report this as a reason for discontinuing an apprenticeship. A similar proportion (15.1%) said: "job instability" (related to the financial capacity problem identified by CAF) as the main reason for discontinuing their apprenticeships (Statistics Canada, 2015).

However, the Conference Board of Canada believes that a tightening labour market and a falling unemployment rate will benefit immigrant workers (Diaz, 2019).

### **Language Skills**

Language proficiency data for 2013 showed that 33% of newcomers could not speak one of Canada's official languages at arrival (Wilkinson, et al., 2016). Both the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum and the Comité consultative Personnes immigrantes (CCPI) identified language barriers, particularly around technical jargon and slang, as obstacles that made newcomers feel excluded in the workplace. English or French as a second language training was viewed as necessary, but the workplace use of acronyms, slang and jargon also needs to be considered. Communication barriers were regarded as having workplace safety implications, as well as undermining a newcomer's ability to fully participate as part of a team in their workplace (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2017), (Blain, et al., December, 2018).

### **Future Directions**

Some of the implications of their survey of skilled immigrants which WES identified were: using competency-informed assessments to increase employer confidence in international experience, providing more practical information to immigrants about employment in Canada, providing specific interventions and resources to enable immigrants to successfully navigate all the steps required to re-enter a regulated occupation in Canada, and for service providers to collectively identify which specific employment services and service delivery models lead to the best results for skilled immigrant job seekers (WES, 2019).

CAF explains that newcomers remain under-represented in apprenticeships because they have negative perceptions of skilled trades careers, which prevents them from pursuing this path. (Ref. #6) They have found that, while family (28%) is the most significant influencer on an individual's decision to enter into the trades in the general population, employers were more prominent influencers than family or friends for immigrants (20%) (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2018).

For newcomers to get jobs in skilled trades, Canadian experience is often essential. Work placements provided by programs that connect visible minority/racialized groups with employers in the skilled trades may be necessary for the participants (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2010). Work placements provide practical experience and contacts with employers (Blain, et al., December, 2018).

While newcomers require more essential skills and language training before pursuing technical training than their non-immigrant peers (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2017), it is also necessary to ensure that employers are aware of supports available when they hire immigrant apprentices, which could make hiring newcomers more attractive to them (Canadian



Apprenticeship Forum, 2017), (Drolet, et al., 2014). Drolet et al. (2014) found a lack of evidence of employer engagement in the provision of settlement services, notwithstanding the substantial employer stake in hiring and optimizing immigrant workers. They write that training programs, diversity workshops, and mentorship are essential components concerning employment organizations' efforts to assist newcomers. The CAF recommends cross-cultural competency training for managers, journeypersons and apprentices who work at skilled trades companies (Canadian Apprenticeship Forum, 2018).



## APPENDIX D: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

The focus group questions followed the 4 themes identified in the research program for Trades Talent Link:

- motivation
- perception
- expectations
- information

The same questions were asked of each group as much as possible. The order and wording of the questions varied slightly to be relevant to the participants' circumstances (e.g. whether they were currently in a program at the Y or not). Not all questions were asked in each group due to time constraints.

### **Motivation:**

What does a "good job" mean to you?

- Do you think that "good jobs" exist in the trades?

### **Perception:**

Why did you decide to work in skilled trades?

- What do your family and community think about your decision to work in skilled trades? Do they support your choice?
- Have you had other types of jobs before starting this program?

### **Expectations:**

What challenges do you foresee in your first year of working in trades?

- What challenges/barriers have you overcome to get to this point in your Canadian career?
- What has helped you the most in getting a job in the trades?

One 2-part question was added in 2019 to help better understand the expectations and challenges for newcomers:

- When you see a job posting, what kinds of things that the ad says would make you think that you have a good chance at that job? What tells you that they might hire someone without a lot of Canadian experience?
- When you see a job posting, what are some things that make you think that it's not worth applying? Have you seen requirements in job ads that make you think, "that's not for me"?

### **Information:**

Where do you get your information about employment?

- How did you hear about the Y's programs?
- What resources did you use to learn about trade regulation, apprenticeship and certification?
- What do you wish you had known before coming to Canada?
- How can we make information about trades/employment more accessible and understandable for you?
- Who else would want to know the information provided by this program? How could we reach them?



## **APPENDIX E: EMPLOYER SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES**

### **SURVEY 1 2018/19**

#### **Survey Welcome Message**

Thank you for participating in our employer survey. This survey is being conducted by the YMCA-YWCA of the National Capital Region (the Y) as part of the Trades Talent Link project's activities, funded by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada.

The Y provides services to employers, including help for hiring, training and retaining new staff. This survey will help us better understand skilled trades employers' specific needs to continue to improve the work that we do to help close the skills gap in the trades.

These survey results will be summarized and presented as part of a recommendation and best practices report shared with stakeholders in skilled trades such as employers, policy-makers, regulators, and service providers.

As a thank you for completing today's survey, we would like to offer you the chance to win a family membership to the Y, including access to all of our fitness facilities across the National Capital Region as well as many other communities across the country. If you would like to enter the draw, please enter your contact information at the end of the survey.

The survey should take between 15 and 20 minutes to complete.

#### **Statement of Confidentiality**

All the information you provide will be treated as confidential and individual results will not be disclosed to any other organization. The names of individuals responding to the survey will be anonymous. However, the name of your company will be used by Y staff in their analysis of survey responses. Your company name will not be disclosed to any other organization.

*Instructions in italics indicate survey logic and will not appear on the actual survey*

*\* = mandatory question*

**Demographics Questions**

1. What is the name of your company?
  2. In which sectors do you hire tradespeople? Check all that apply.
    - a. Construction (i.e. electricians, HVAC technicians, carpenters, sheet metal workers, etc.)
    - b. Industrial (i.e. welders, building technicians, instrumentation & control technicians, machinists, etc.)
    - c. Motive power (i.e. automotive service technicians, truck & coach technicians, heavy-duty equipment technicians, etc.)
    - d. Service (i.e. hairstylists, child development practitioners, cooks, network cabling technicians, etc.)
  3. What is your role within your company?\*
- a. I am responsible for hiring people to work in skilled trades positions
  - b. I am responsible for supervising/training people working in skilled trades positions
  - c. I am responsible for hiring AND supervising/training people working in skilled trades positions
  - d. I am an HR professional responsible for general hiring within the company, and this can include skilled trades positions *[go to disqualification]*
  - e. None of the above *[go to disqualification]*

**Hiring Practices Questions**

4. In the past 12 months, has your organization hired at least 1 registered apprentice?\*
  5. If you were to hire a registered apprentice again in the future, what would be useful to help this hire be successful (success can be measured in that the apprentice became a productive team member)? Check all that apply:
  6. In the past 12 months has your organization hired for at least 1 skilled trades position that wasn't an apprenticeship? Check all that apply.\*
  7. For general labourers hired in the last 12 months, why weren't these positions registered as apprenticeships? Check all that apply. *[after answering go to Q11]*
-



8. If you were to hire a registered apprentice in the future, what would be useful to help this hire be successful (success can be measured in that the apprentice became a productive team member)? Check all that apply:
- Financial support to off-set training costs
  - Assistance with administrative process (registration with MTCU, etc.)
  - Information to understand apprenticeship regulations and training expectations
  - Pre-screening for apprenticeship hires
  - Support for the apprentice's individual challenges (i.e. academic skills, mental health/addiction, child care, etc.)
  - No support would be useful
  - Other: (text answer – respondent can provide short answer)
9. In the past 12 months has your organization hired for at least 1 skilled trades position? Check all that apply.\*
- General labourer *[go to Q10]*
  - Certified or licensed tradesperson *[skip to Q11]*
  - Uncertified skilled tradesperson *[skip to Q11]*
  - My company has not hired for any skilled trades positions in the past 12 months *[skip to Q11]*
  - Unsure *[skip to Q11]*
10. For general labourers hired in the last 12 months, why weren't these positions registered as apprenticeships? Check all that apply.
- I don't know what "registered as apprenticeships" means
  - I don't know what to do in order to hire/train/register apprentices
  - Hiring/registering/training apprentices does not benefit my company
  - My company doesn't have the resources to hire/train/register apprentices
  - The person(s) we hired is not an appropriate candidate for apprenticeship
  - The position(s) we hired for is not eligible/appropriate for apprenticeship
  - We would like to register apprentices but are restricted by regulations (i.e. ratios)
  - Other: *[text answer – respondent provides short answer]*
- 
11. The following is a list of 8 statements about the apprenticeship and trade certification process in Ontario. Please help us to develop training and resources based on employers' knowledge of these processes by telling us whether you understand the following statements to be TRUE or FALSE. Correct answers will be provided at the end of the survey.
- Apprenticeship is regulated provincially
  - An apprentice must have an employer who can train them on the job
  - Apprentices must be paid employees
  - Employers must agree to allow apprentices time off work to attend school
  - It is necessary to have a college diploma before starting an apprenticeship
  - Certain trades legally require provincial certification and others do not
  - If a tradesperson with international experience did not do an apprenticeship in Ontario, they can go through the Trade Equivalency Assessment (TEA) process to obtain their Ontario Certificate of Qualification.
12. When hiring someone for an entry-level skilled trades position in your company, what skills or qualifications are required prior to hiring? *[rank each qualification as "Always", "Sometimes" or "Never"]*
- Ontario Secondary School Diploma



- Provincial trade certification
  - Industry- or trade-specific certification (i.e. TSSA, RECE, etc.)
  - Trade-specific technical skills
  - Established connections/network within industry
  - Local experience in the trade that you are hiring for
  - Union membership
  - Ability to obtain security clearance
  - Access to a vehicle
  - Other
13. When hiring someone for an entry-level skilled trades position in your company, what level of language proficiency is required prior to hiring?
- a. English
    - i. Basic (able to hold limited conversations and read/write simple documents)
    - ii. Advanced (able to use and understand complex technical language)
    - iii. N/A
  - b. French
    - i. Basic (able to hold limited conversations and read/write simple documents)
    - ii. Advanced (able to use and understand complex technical language)
    - iii. N/A
  - c. Other: *[text answer – respondent to provide short answer]*
14. To your knowledge, has your organization hired any new immigrants in the past 12 months? A new immigrant is defined as someone who has moved to Canada within the last 5 years.\*
- a. Yes *[go to Q15]*
  - b. No *[skip to Q16]*
- 
15. If you were to hire a new immigrant again in the future, what would be useful to help this hire be successful (success can be measured in that the person became a productive team member)? Check all that apply *[after answering, go to Q18]*
- a. Financial support to off-set training costs
  - b. Assistance with paperwork related to immigration (renewing work permits, etc.)
  - c. Training for staff and managers/supervisors to understand how to integrate employees from different cultures successfully
  - d. Pre-screening of potential candidates
  - e. Support for the new immigrant's individual challenges (i.e. academic skills, mental health/addiction, child care, etc.)
  - f. Workplace language training
  - g. No support would be needed
  - h. Other: (text answer – respondent can provide short answer)
- 
16. In the past 12 months, why has your organization not hired new immigrants to fill skilled trades vacancies? Check all that apply:
- a. I haven't had new immigrants apply for available jobs
  - b. New immigrants tend not to have the required qualifications to work in positions I'm hiring for
  - c. Employees of our company need to speak English or French at a certain level
  - d. New immigrants may not be legally entitled to work in Canada
  - e. New immigrants may have a hard time fitting into my workplace



- f. We would like to hire new immigrants but we don't know how to attract them to our company
  - g. We have not had any skilled trades vacancies
  - h. Other: *[text answer – respondent to provide short answer]*
- 17. If you were to hire a new immigrant in the future, what would be useful to help this hire be successful (success can be measured in that the person became a productive team member)? Check all that apply *[after answering, go to Q18]*
  - a. Financial support to off-set training costs
  - b. Assistance with paperwork related to immigration (renewing work permits, etc.)
  - c. Training for staff and managers/supervisors to understand how to integrate employees from different cultures successfully
  - d. Pre-screening of potential candidates
  - e. Support for the new immigrant's individual challenges (i.e. academic skills, mental health/addiction, child care, etc.)
  - f. Workplace language training
  - g. No support would be needed
  - h. Other: (text answer – respondent can provide short answer)

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- 18. In the past 12 months, has your company accessed services to help with employee recruitment or retention? (e.g. Employment Ontario, hiring co-op students, participating in job fairs, etc.)\*
  - a. Yes *[skip to Q20]*
  - b. No *[go to Q19]*
  - c. Unsure *[skip to Q21]*
- 19. Why didn't you access services to help with employee recruitment or retention?\* *[after answering, go to Q21]*
  - a. I did not know that these services exist
  - b. I don't know where to find these services
  - c. My company is not eligible to receive these services
  - d. My company did not need these services
  - e. Unsure
  - f. Other: *[text answer – respondent to provide short answer]*
- 20. In the past 12 months, has your company accessed services to assist in employee recruitment or retention through the YMCA-YWCA of the National Capital Region?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Unsure
- 21. Do you foresee a shortage of skilled labour impacting the success and/or growth of your business over the next 5 years?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Unsure
- 22. Does a shortage of skilled labour currently impact the success and/or growth of your business?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Unsure
- 23. Are immigrants an important source of skilled labour for your company?
  - a. Yes



- b. No
  - c. Unsure
24. Thank you for completing our survey! Please indicate the next steps you would like to take.  
Check all that apply:
- a. I do not want to be contacted at all *[end survey]*
  - b. I would be open to a follow-up interview about my responses to this survey *[go to Q25]*
  - c. I would like a Y staff to contact me about how they can help with hiring, training and retaining staff in skilled trades and other positions *[go to Q25]*
  - d. I would like to be entered in a draw to win a family membership to the YMCA-YWCA *[go to Q25]*
  - e. Other *[go to Q25]*
25. If you indicated that you are willing to be contacted and/or to be entered into the draw please enter your contact information here.  
Please note that information entered into Survey Monkey may be stored on servers that are located outside of Canada. If you would prefer to provide contact information in a more direct fashion, please contact Madison Watson (Director, Immigrant Employment Programs) at 613-788-5001 ext. 5034 or [madison.watson@ymcaywca.ca](mailto:madison.watson@ymcaywca.ca).
- END SURVEY & direct to [page](#) with info about NITs programs & answers to knowledge questions---
- Disqualification page:
26. Thank you for taking time for our survey. For the purposes of this research we are seeking responses from individuals who are directly responsible for the hiring and/or supervision of skilled tradespeople. If someone else in your company fits this criterion and would be interested in the survey, please feel free to share the link with them or share their contact information with our team.  
Please note that information entered into Survey Monkey may be stored on servers that are located outside of Canada. If you would prefer to provide contact information in a more direct fashion, please contact Madison Watson (Director, Immigrant Employment Programs) at 613-788-5001 ext. 5034 or [madison.watson@ymcaywca.ca](mailto:madison.watson@ymcaywca.ca).  
If you would prefer to end the survey immediately, please skip to the next question.
- a. Name
  - b. Email address
  - c. Phone number
27. The Y offers services to employers to help with hiring, training and retaining staff in skilled trades and other positions. Would you like Y staff to contact you to learn more about how we can help your company grow?\*
- a. Yes *[go to Q25]*
  - b. No *[end survey]*