



**Trades Talent Link**  
Improving  
newcomer access  
to skilled trades  
employment

# Who we are?

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# Outline

- What are the skilled trades?
  - *If you have your phone with you, please load the Kahoot app from the appropriate app store 😊*
- Introduction; What we know
- Y Trades Programs
- What is a good job?
- Trades Talent Link
  - Research questions & project information
  - Education seminars
  - Newcomer focus groups
  - Employer survey
  - Pilot interventions



# Introduction – What we know

- There is a growing **labour market shortage in skilled trades in Canada**, and yet a **small percentage of newcomers participate** in this sector.
  - Only 8.7% of Canadian apprentices are newcomers (National Apprenticeship Survey)
  - Skills Canada estimates 40% of new jobs created in the next decade will be in the skilled trades (Ontario Chamber of Commerce, 2017)
  - 62% of Ontario Construction Secretariat's 2019 contractor survey respondents have experienced skilled labour shortages in last 3 years
    - Hiring immigrants is not mentioned as a solution, but when asked respondents said that they were open to new recruitment strategies



# Culture shift

## **Newcomer perspective:**

- Skilled trades are survival jobs
- Career decisions are influenced by family and past experiences
- University against apprenticeship
- Cultural image of success

## **Canadian perspective:**

- Skilled trades are well-regarded careers
- Professional employment consulting
- Alternative career path - apprenticeship



# What gaps have we identified?

- Between the type of candidate employers are seeking and the job-seeker who applies
  - Skills to develop to improve productivity
  - Skills needed to increase innovation and sustainability
- Between a newcomer job-seeker expectations and what they actually do on the job



# What do we think we know?

## **Employers:**

- Union protectionism
- “Traditional” hiring practices
- Prerequisite qualifications that are difficult for newcomers to obtain
- Precarious employment (seasonal, temporary, etc.)
- Lack of information/experience with newcomers

## **Regulators:**

- Challenges of foreign qualification recognition process
- System dependent on employer participation



# What do we think we know?

## **Newcomers:**

- Disproportionate marketing of post-secondary options to newcomers
- Perception of skilled trades as “labour”
- Lack of information
- Cultural expectations and ideas of work/career

## **Service providers:**

- Difficulty connecting effectively with trades employers
- Programs/services don't always have expected or desired outcomes
- “Running faster than the client”







**YMCA-YWCA of  
the National  
Capital Region;  
Skilled Trades  
Programs**

# Who are we talking to?

Populations who live with multiple barriers:

- Complicated past lives
- Language barriers
- Culture shock
  - Cultural norms and gender roles
  - Identity questioning
  - Difficulty integrating



# Program participation – “in class” programs

Who is our “typical” program participant?

- Male
- Late thirties
- Post-secondary education
- Permanent resident
- Little to no prior experience in skilled trades
- Has been in Canada 4-5 years
- From Africa or Asia



# Employer participation

Who is our typical employer?

- Small to medium-sized enterprise
- Voluntary trades (unregulated)
- Non-union
- Experiencing skills shortage
- Does not typically register apprentices
- Interested in hiring immediately



# Power of Trades



# Pre-apprenticeship for home renovation



# Pre-apprenticeship for horticulture/landscaping



# Build ON





# Trades Talent Link



# Service Overview – “in-class” programs

- Open to any experience level
- Financial support for tools & equipment
- Health & Safety certification training
- Employment preparation
- Job development & placement support
- Minimum Canadian Language Benchmark 5+
- Partnership with local school boards for academic upgrading, co-op credits and Prior Learning Assessment & Recognition



# Service overview – “individual consultation”

- Open to all skilled trades sectors & levels of experience\*
- One-on-one service
- Short-term intervention
- No language requirement to participate (interpreters available from partners and multilingual team)
- Referral to longer-term interventions
- “Action plan” created with client for future reference
- Workshops/webinars available

\*Build ON services expanded in January 2019 to include engineering and related professions



# Challenges

- Employer engagement (especially at the beginning of our journey)
- Participant recruitment (for example participants need CLB 5)
- Participant diversity (different CLB, skills, level of experience and education)
- Bilingual programming
- No childcare (great barrier, especially for women)
- Settlement and personal issues



# What have we learned? What is important?

- Defining ourselves as supportive partners rather than competitors
- Low staff to participant ratios
- Screening/interview processes to select participant with strong motivation
- Importance of individual consultation offerings
- Redefining “positive outcomes”
- Engaging employers on an individual basis
- Focused strategies for Francophones
- Multiple funders/leveraging key partnerships





Trades Talent  
Link: Evaluating  
interventions for  
newcomers and  
employers

# Trades Talent Link Objective

To make identify best practices that will address the gaps between newcomer job-seekers and Ottawa skilled trades employers who are experiencing a shortage of labour and talent.



# Trades Talent Link Objectives

## **Research & evaluation to:**

- Prove or disprove what we think we already know about newcomers and trades employers
- Demonstrate/improve the effectiveness of best practices we've developed







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## What is a good job?

1. We think we already know that good jobs exist in the trades sector, which is why our programs exist, but **what is a good job?**
2. **Who** defines what a good job is?

# Research Questions

- What do newcomers consider to be “good jobs”?
  - Education seminars, focus groups
- Are there “good jobs” in Ottawa’s skilled trades sector? Why aren’t more newcomers working in these “good jobs”?
  - Employer surveys in years 1 & 3, interviews with survey respondents
- What can be done to improve the process of attracting, hiring and retaining newcomers in “good jobs” in trades?
  - Employer “training” – content related to inclusive hiring practices such as language used in job ads, as well as the concepts of equity and inclusion, how language training happens and why specific qualifications (e.g. high school diploma) may be difficult for a newcomer to produce
  - YMCA-YWCA skilled trades training programs that work with employers so that we are developing clients’ skills to match the labour market needs.



# Why are we doing this?

For all of our stakeholders:

- Increase access to **information**
- Allow opportunity to change **perception**
- Increase **motivation** for newcomers to pursue skilled trades careers
- Set realistic **expectations** as to what a career in trades would be like for a newcomer



# Evaluation strategies and tools

## Evaluation tools/strategies:

- Analysis of existing program evaluation tools and data (feedback forms, etc.)
- Implementation evaluation of mentorship and employer training
- Pre/post surveys
- Feedback forms
- Interviews
- Lessons learned discussions & documentation
- Documenting changes to our activities & trades programs

**Social Planning Council of Ottawa is 3<sup>rd</sup> party project evaluator**





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# Education Seminars

# Educational seminars

## Objectives

- Give exposure to the skilled trades careers in Ontario
- Provide newcomers with the necessary information to start a career in the skilled trades
- Challenge conventional beliefs and ideas about the skilled trades



# Educational Seminars

## Participants evaluations:

- There are good careers in the skilled trades
- Obtained a deeper understanding of the skilled trades and its pathways
- Different types of jobs in the skilled trades



# Educational seminars

## Challenges experienced

- Low attendance at seminars offered at our Y employment and newcomer services locations
- Language barriers

## How was it solved

- Going where newcomers were
- Changed the title
- Flexible delivery format
- Translation of presentation materials into various languages
- Input from ESL teachers





# How employers and newcomers are disconnected?

## Employers perspective gaps

- Many employers are not well informed
- Language barriers
- Job retention
- There is no access to qualified skilled workers

*Most employers are willing to train employees as long as they had some skills from before.*



# How employers and newcomers are disconnected?

## Challenges/perceptions

### Newcomers

- There are misconceptions around the skilled trades
- Newcomers need more information
- Lack of Canadian experience
- language limitations
- Little or no recognition of international experience or credentials
- There is not enough support for women



# Focus Groups

Focus groups intend to obtain newcomers perceptions by asking questions such as “

- Do you think that “good jobs” exist in the trades?”,
  - When participants were asked if they believed that there were good jobs in the trades, the answer was an overwhelming “yes”
- “What challenges/barriers have you overcome to get to this point in your Canadian career?”
  - The two challenges that came up the most often were a lack of Canadian experience and inadequate English language skills.



# Focus Groups

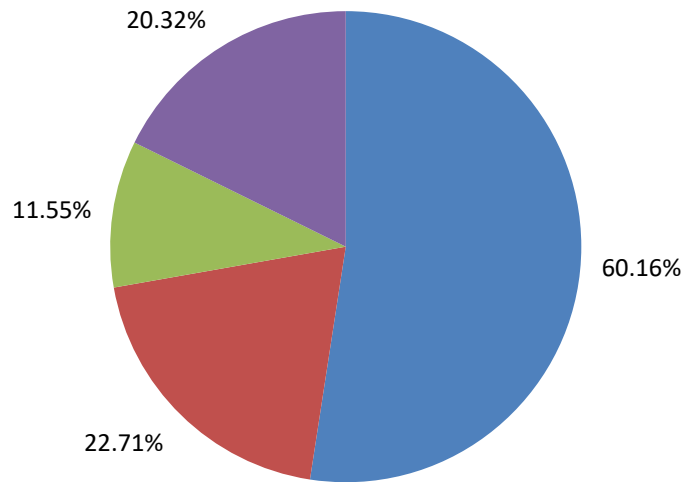
## Other challenges

- The expense of re-training
- Caring for children while working.
- Missing documents from the home country



# Survey - Distribution of Sectors

■ Construction ■ Service ■ Industrial ■ Motive Power



n=250

## “Check all that apply”

- 32 respondents indicated they hired in more than one sector
- Some confusion about which sector
- e.g. Some automotive thought they were “service”
  - We did not correct for this assumption because it demonstrates a lack of knowledge starting at the “sector” level (perception)

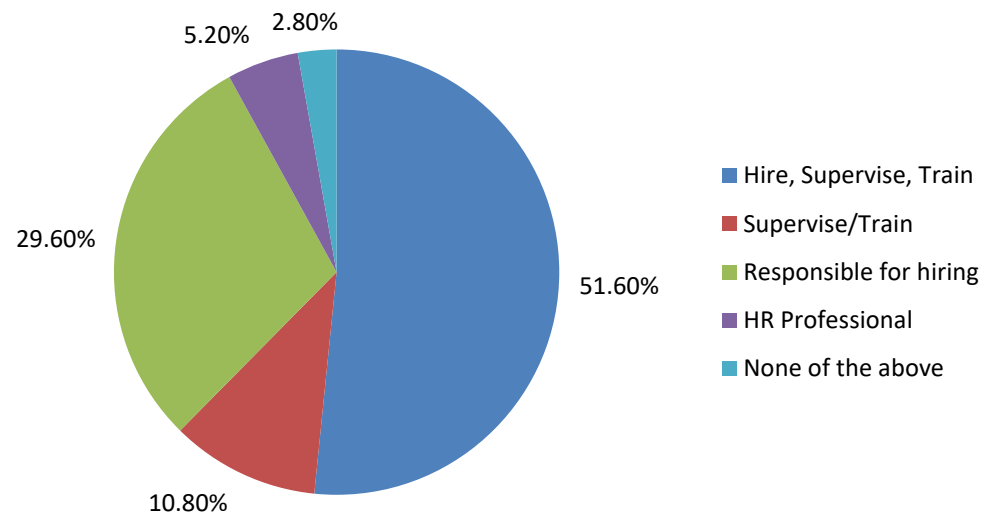
Industry Sector	Completed Surveys	Margin of Error <sup>1</sup>
Construction	152	±4.9%
Service	57	±5.2%
Motive Power	51	±5.0%
Industrial	29	±4.0%

1. At 95% confidence interval



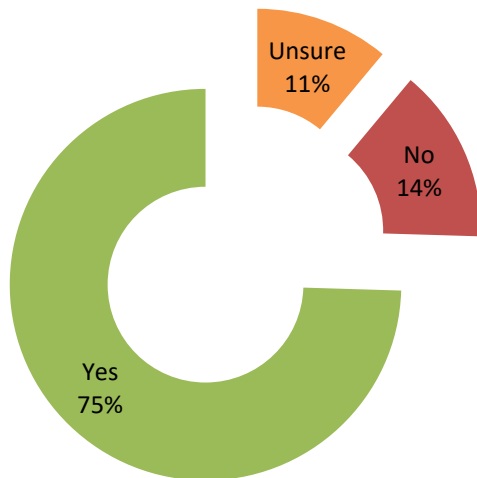
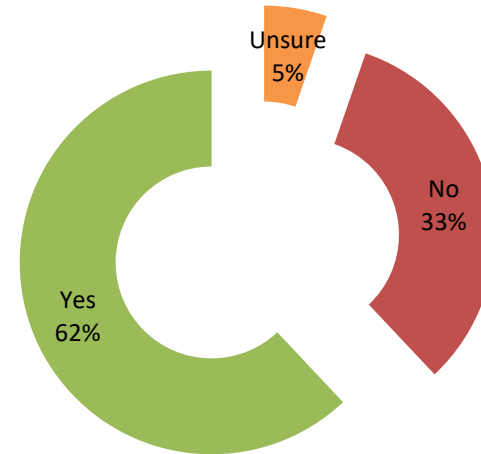
# Survey - Distribution of respondents

- Disqualification; we wanted to speak to individuals with experience hiring in the skilled trades and an understanding of the skills needed



# Survey - Labour Shortages

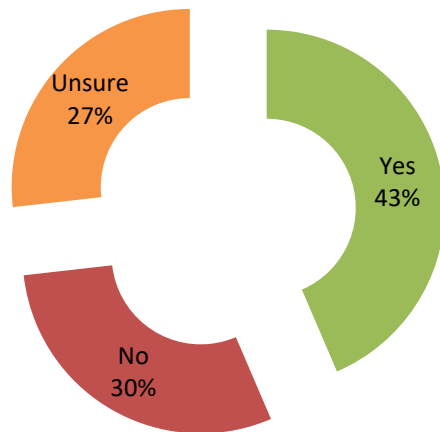
Does a shortage of skilled labour **currently** impact the success and/or growth of your business?



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



# Survey - Hiring Immigrants

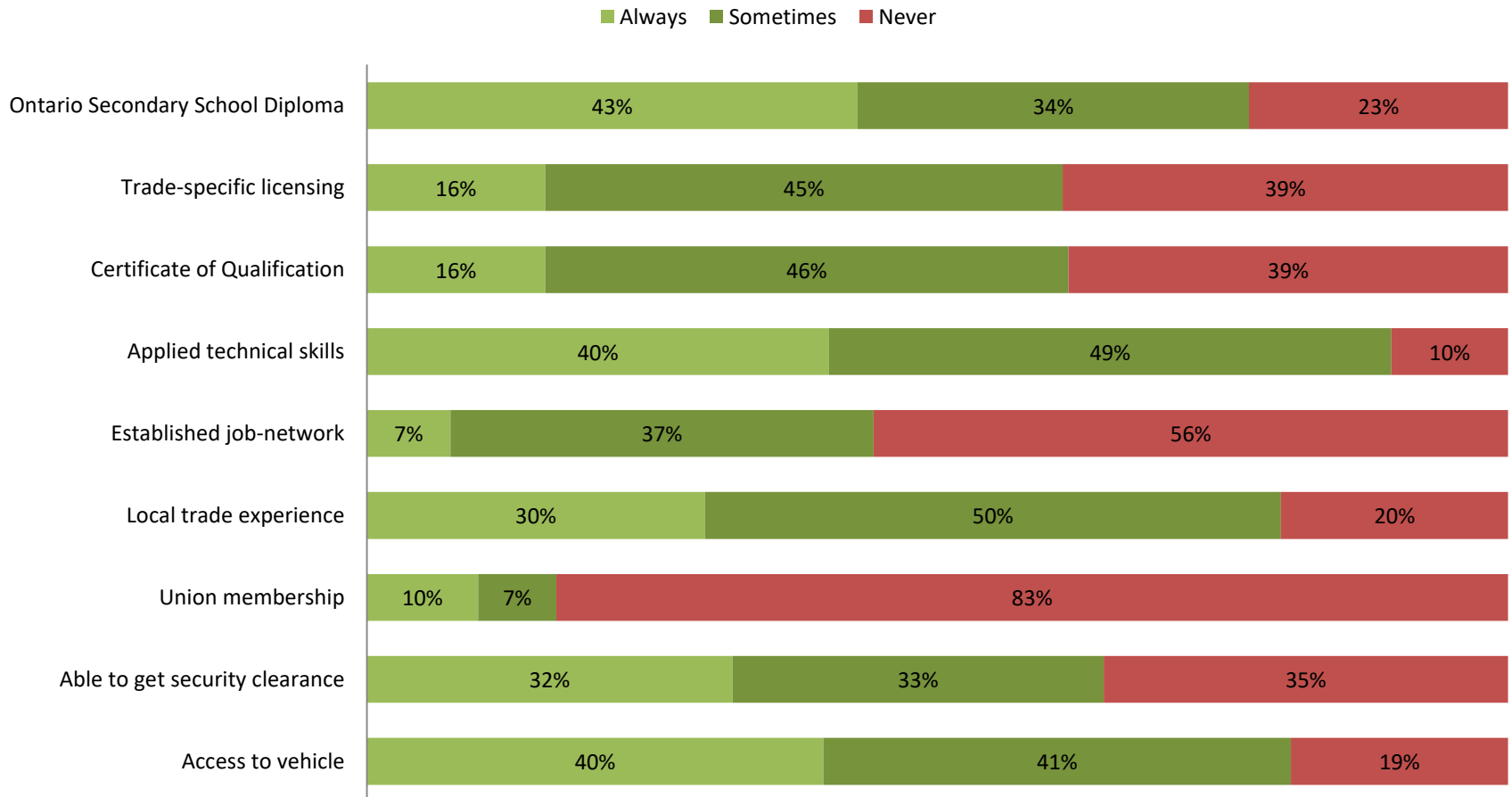


## Are immigrants an important source of skilled labour for your company?

- Even though the response was overwhelmingly that employers aren't hiring newcomers – they are open to looking at different labour pools
- When asked “why”, most employers responded that newcomers aren't applying



# We asked about skills & qualifications for an entry level position



# What can we do to connect employers & immigrants?

## *Trades Talent Link, Year 2 Initiatives*





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## Case Study; Anas' Story



Career change  
Little to no  
related  
experience



Career  
continued  
Experienced in  
desired career



Career shift  
Some or related  
experience



# Case study: Anas' story

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7BavQR\\_NA4&index=8&t=0s&list=PL5Whf68BOrl\\_kzJ\\_HqS1464b1IP9bRc5Wft](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7BavQR_NA4&index=8&t=0s&list=PL5Whf68BOrl_kzJ_HqS1464b1IP9bRc5Wft)

A new life in Ottawa



# Case study: Anas' story

- What do you do with a client like this?
  - Multiple technical/hands-on careers
  - A range of technical skills and experience
  - New to Canada



# Anas' story

- Which path should Anas follow?
- Long-term career goals?
- What shortcuts can he take?
- What is realistic given his current situation?

