

SHARING SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION PRACTICES THAT WORK BUILDERS CODE

British Columbia Construction Association
British Columbia

Area of Practice:

Anti-Racism Dialogues and Initiatives

Video:

<https://youtu.be/VWGTrjiph88>

A Pathways to
Prosperity Project

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PATHWAYS TO
PROSPERITY
Promoting Welcoming Communities in Canada



VOIES VERS LA
PROSPÉRITÉ
Promouvoir des communautés accueillantes au Canada

BACKGROUND ON THE ORGANIZATION AND IMPETUS FOR THE PROGRAM

The British Columbia Construction Association (BCCA) is a provincial organization advocating for all companies in British Columbia's industrial, commercial, and institutional construction sector regardless of labour affiliations. It protects contractors' interests with the provincial government, and provides expert procurement services, access to project opportunities and talent, and funding for apprenticeship training. As a non-profit organization, BCCA's mission is to ensure a productive and resilient industry. BCCA's values include community, safety, ethical and respectful business practices, fair market competition, innovation, and leadership.

The impetus for the development of the Builders Code was the skilled labour shortage that British Columbia's construction sector has been experiencing for several years. For example, in 2018, a report by Buildforce Canada estimated that there was a shortage of 11,700 skilled trade workers in British Columbia. In order to meet the demand for skilled labour in British Columbia's construction sector, it is important that the sector attracts and retains a diversity of skilled trade workers. However, in a male dominated sector, it is a challenge to attract and retain a diversity of skilled trade workers, including workers of a different gender, age, race or ethnicity. In 2019, a group of industry stakeholders led by the BCCA launched the Builders Code as a two-year pilot project. During this time, the main focus of the Builders Code was to reduce the skilled labour shortage in British Columbia's construction sector through the improvement of the attraction and retention of female tradespeople. After the success of the pilot project, the Builders Code expanded to also address the attraction and retention of a diversity of trade workers (e.g., diversity based on ethnicity and race).

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

Name:

Builders Code

Description:

The Builders Code is a non-regulated, optional program for employers in the construction sector in British Columbia. The aim of the program is to help employers in the construction sector in British Columbia to improve their worksite culture. By setting a standard code of conduct, the Builders Code helps construction employers to communicate to their workers a reasonable, consistent behavior expectation to improve the safety, productivity and retention of skilled trade workers, and reduce project risk. Importantly, the Builders Code widens the definition of safety beyond physical concerns to include stress or distraction caused by discrimination, bullying, hazing or harassment.

The Builders Code program consists of several services, most of which are offered at no cost to construction employers. One of the services of the Builders Code includes provision of a workplace pledge. Employers (and their workers) can sign the pledge to demonstrate their commitment to the level of behaviour that is deemed acceptable on a worksite (e.g., no hazing, bullying or harassment). The Builders Code also provides employers with a number of posters that can be displayed on the worksites. These posters are an effective way to remind workers about the commitment they have made.

Another service of the Builders Code includes provision of free, comprehensive HR policies about acceptable worksites (e.g., worksites that are free from discrimination, bullying, harassment and hazing). Construction employers can download these policies from the Builders Code website. These policies are written in plain language specifically for the construction sector, and specifically for small and medium-sized employers who may not already have their own policies.

The Builders Code also provides employers with confidential access to ‘employer advisors’ to help employers adopt the Builders Code, and/or to navigate and resolve any HR-related issues. The advisors are HR professionals who are available at no cost and can be contacted by phone, email or in-person.

Another service of the Builders Code includes training. The training is offered at a cost and is customized to the employer’s needs. For example, the training can be customized to the executive leadership or the leadership on a construction site (e.g., site supers, foremen, business managers), or for a group of employees in diverse roles across the company. The training is delivered online or in-person at a location that is convenient for the employer. It is also available on a seat-by-seat basis.

In order to also offer training to crews on construction sites, the Builders Code created a free app called ‘Cool or Tool’. The free app uses animation to depict real life scenarios such as aggressively yelling and swearing at apprentices, and teaches crew members to recognize the difference between “Cool or Tool” behaviour. The app asks crew members to respond to one or two questions on a daily basis and is designed to be a fun experience and to complement the workplace pledge.

Finally, the Builders Code also recognizes employers who are making a positive difference in advancing the culture of British Columbia’s construction sector through Champion Awards. These awards take place annually.

Goal(s):

During the pilot, the main goal of the Builders Code was to make British Columbia’s skilled trade labour force 10 percent female by 2028. Since the end of the pilot, the Builders Code has continued to work towards this goal.

In addition, the Builders Code now also aims to focus more broadly on putting the foundations in place to reduce the incidence of racism, discrimination and bias for everyone. In other words, the overall goal of the Builders Code is to improve the attraction and retention of diverse skilled trade workers in British Columbia’s construction sector.

Target Client Group(s):

The clients of the Builders Code program are employers in the construction sector in British Columbia. By supporting employers in the construction sector, the Builders Code also indirectly targets the workers in the sector.

Delivery Partners:

Since the inception of the Builders Code, the BCCA has been working with the following partners: WorkSafeBC, The BC Construction Safety Alliance, The Industry Training Authority (ITA) of British

Columbia, BCCA's Employee Benefits Trust, LNG Canada, and the four regional construction associations including the Vancouver Regional Construction Association, the Northern Regional Construction Association, the Vancouver Island Construction Association, and the Southern Interior Construction Association. The partners have played an important role during the creation, launch, distribution and validation of the program.

Human Resources:

The Builders Code is operated by BCCA, which provides corporate support services from leadership strategy to accounting, marketing, HR, and administration. There is a team of up to four advisors and trainers who work on a freelance basis. There is one full-time employee, a provincial manager. The home office for Builders Code is the BCCA corporate headquarters.

Funding:

The Builders Code pilot was co-funded between the BCCA, a group of stakeholders in the construction industry, the Government of Canada, and the province of British Columbia through a Labour Market Development Agreement. Since the pilot ended, the program has been self-sustaining.

KEY FEATURES THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THIS BEING A PROMISING PRACTICE

Effective:

A central feature that contributes to the Builders Code's effectiveness is the language used. The language that is typically used by experts in diversity, equity and inclusion is not the language commonly used on construction sites. On construction sites, an important element of language is physical safety. For this reason, the Builders Code focused on expanding the definition of safety to also include psychological safety on top of physical safety. Furthermore, the language of the Builders Code focuses on the safety of everyone, and not just equity-seeking groups. This way, the focus is on inclusion and understanding that everyone can be a victim of hazing, bullying and harassment. Finally, the language of the Builders Code incorporates business language (e.g., talent retention, productivity, risk reduction, brand image, etc.) given that construction employers are focused on running a business.

Another feature that contributes to the Builders Code's effectiveness is that it is a non-regulatory program which is offered almost entirely for free. In other words, it is a voluntary program with a low barrier to entry. Any construction employer interested in the Builders Code can access the services. Moreover, employers can pick and choose which of the services they are most interested in.

Efficient:

With the exception of the code advisors, the Builders Code is a relatively low-touch program. Also, most of the services are easily scalable. This includes, for example, the HR policies and the training app for crews, which can easily be downloaded. The program's website also includes tools and services that are easily accessible to everyone.

In addition, the fact that BCCA partnered with several stakeholders in the industry helped to add important information and credibility to the Builders Code right from the beginning.

Relevant:

In year 1 of the pilot, the Builders Code surveyed 250 construction employers and 150 tradeswomen. Ninety-five percent of female employers and 79% of male employers agreed that the construction industry could do more to accept and support tradeswomen. In fact, only two-thirds of tradeswomen felt that their workplace provided safety and reflected acceptance of them as tradeswomen. Also, 60% of female employers and 66% of male employers felt that as employers they could do more to actively implement policies that support the equitable treatment of all employees within the workplace.

These findings, as well as the shortage of skilled trade workers in the construction sector, reveal that programs to attract and retain a diversity of new workers to trades is a priority. This is especially the case as the sector is expected to expand and baby boomers are expected to retire in the near future.

Sustainable:

In order to operate as a self-sustaining program post-pilot, the Builders Code will continue to pursue revenue in multiple ways. This includes providing employer training for a fee, relying on awards and sponsorships, sustaining partnerships, and jurisdictional licensing.

Transferable:

The Builders Code is transferable to other jurisdictions and other industries. In terms of other jurisdictions, the Builders Code has developed a jurisdictional licensing model to expand outside of British Columbia. For example, the Builders Code expanded through a partnership with the Northwest Territories and Nunavut Construction Association, which have received territorial funding to introduce all of the elements of the Builders Code into the local construction industry. In terms of other industries, the Builders Code has received a lot of interest from the mining industry as well as other industries such as the hospitality industry and law enforcement.

In order for a program like the Builders Code to be replicated successfully, it is important to have excellent relationships with other stakeholders in the industry and to have a track record of working collaboratively with these stakeholders. This allows for different skills, experiences and abilities to come together to develop an effective program. In addition, the expertise of HR professionals is essential when it comes to developing a program aimed at changing a workplace culture. Finally, in order to be effective, the emphasis on language, communication, community engagement and marketing is of great importance.

Innovative and Forward Thinking:

The BCCA intentionally partnered with stakeholder organizations that are already involved in the day-to-day operations of employers in the construction sector, particularly related to health and safety issues. By having partners who are already invested in safety outcomes, the BCCA was able to build a program with a higher likelihood of success. This is because all stakeholders believe in the program's mission and because they are also able to achieve their own goals through the program.

Differs in Definable Ways from Other Similar Practices:

A unique feature of the Builders Code is that it is focused on building culture by offering services to employers, rather than focusing on providing case-by-case assistance to workers. The program seeks

to change industry from the top down, recognizing that workers often do not carry enough social equity in a company or on a job site to drive change.

High Client Uptake:

Nearly 400 companies in British Columbia have signed the pledge. In addition, hundreds of individuals have participated in the training sessions and downloaded the "Cool or Tool" app. In fact, downloads are not only from across Canada but all over North America, Australia and the United Kingdom.

High Client Retention:

The feedback on the Builders Code from employers and the workers has been overwhelmingly positive. Furthermore, the Builders Code receives a lot of word-of-mouth recommendations. The Builders Code also receives a high level of engagement when the program offers special opportunities for training.

Strong Evidence of Successful Outcomes:

At the end of the pilot in February 2021, the Builders Code had 24,367 website visits, 814 pledge downloads, 206 pledge signatories, and 1,172 policy downloads. For most of these indicators, the Builders Code surpassed the targets it had set for the end the pilot. For example, the Builders Code was ahead 111% for website visits, 106% for pledge downloads, and 521% for policy downloads. While the target of 300 pledge signatories by the end of the pilot was not met, the most recent metrics reveal that nearly 400 employers have now signed the pledge.

In addition, by the end of the pilot, the Builders Code had engaged more code advisors than targeted and had conducted more employer trainings than targeted. In terms of awards, the Builders Code gave out 23 awards by the end of the pilot.

Some of the employers who participated in key informant interviews at the end of the pilot revealed that the Builders Code had a positive impact on their workplace culture. The Builders Code had a positive impact by fostering an emerging culture of equity or by strengthening an existing culture of equity and by initiating conversations about equity-related issues. Employers also noted that the Builders Code was well received and that it did not lead to any negativity or backlash. They also indicated that the changes in the workplace culture would help to increase the pool of trade workers and address the labour shortage.

It is also worth noting that the percentage of women in construction trades in British Columbia increased by 30% from the beginning to the end of the pilot. If this trend continues, the Builders Code will be able to achieve and surpass its goal to reach 10% female trade workers in the industry. Also, before the Builders Code launched, the BCCA annual industry survey showed that about 64% of employers had implemented diversity policies in the construction industry in BC. According to the most recent BCCA survey, this percentage has increased to 84%. While a direct causal link cannot be established between the Builders Code and these changes, it is very possible that the Builders Code contributed to them.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION STRATEGY

During the pilot phase of the program, the BCCA contracted a third-party evaluator. The third-party evaluator developed an evaluation framework to guide the evaluation activities and help identify successes and challenges during the pilot. Another purpose of the evaluation framework was to establish a baseline measure that could be used long-term, beyond the end of the pilot phase.

The evaluation framework included a survey with women in trades and a survey with employers. These surveys were conducted twice, once in year 1 and once in year 2 of the pilot. In addition, in year 2, the third-party evaluator conducted key informant interviews with employers.

Once the pilot ended, BCCA integrated many of the survey questions of the pilot phase into BCCA's annual industry survey. This way, the BCCA has been able to continue to track the impact of the Builders Code and any changes in the culture of the construction industry overall.

Finally, since the implementation of the Builders Code, the BCCA has been tracking website metrics, such as the number of pledge signatories, policy downloads, and app downloads.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The Builders Code: Website

<https://www.builderscode.ca/>

List of Pledge Signatories

<https://www.builderscode.ca/about/employers/#chats>