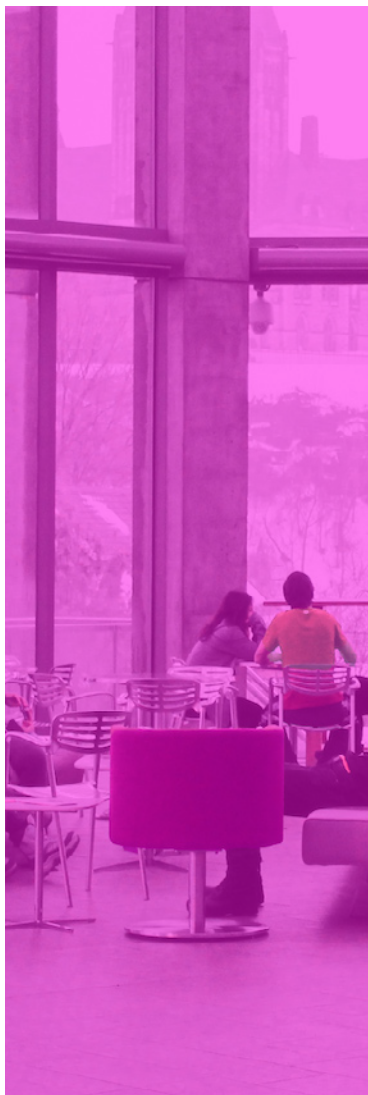




# Finding Value

Identifying and Assessing Social and Emotional Skills in the  
Tourism and Hospitality Industry



**Future Skills**  
Centre

The Future Skills Centre – Centre des Compétences futures (FSC-CCF) is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to preparing Canadians for employment success. We believe Canadians should feel confident about the skills they have to succeed in a changing workforce. As a pan-Canadian community, we are collaborating to rigorously identify, test, measure, and share innovative approaches to assessing and developing the skills Canadians need to thrive in the days and years ahead.

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# Key findings

- Social and emotional skills (SES) development provides workers with transferable skills and enables them to move within and between sectors.
- Hands-on SES training for tourism and hospitality (T&H) jobs is effective and accessible. Examples include on-the-job training and work-integrated learning. SES development will help the T&H sector overcome challenges such as technological disruptions and wage gaps.
- Micro-credentials provide a promising pathway for SES training and recognition.
- Platforms that focus on skill awareness and development can effectively identify and assess SES.



## Introduction

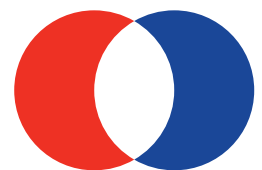
**The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted the tourism and hospitality (T&H) sector, leading to business closures and employee layoffs. Traditionally, the T&H sector attracts young Canadians with little to no work experience. A 2019 Statistics Canada report on the tourism industry found that young workers between the ages of 15 and 24 held more than one-third of all employee jobs in tourism industries.<sup>1</sup>**

Of these, three-quarters were in food and beverage services. Over 50 per cent of the jobs in the tourism sector in 2019 were held by workers whose highest educational attainment was a high school diploma or who did not hold a certificate, diploma, or degree. Yet young T&H workers who have no work experience outside of the sector have been severely impacted by layoffs.<sup>2</sup>

Previous work by The Conference Board of Canada identified social and emotional skills (SES) as being both in high demand among employers and highly transferable between roles.<sup>3</sup> Strong SES can improve a person's ability to transition between roles, or their "employment resiliency."<sup>4</sup> This is consistent with findings from our analysis of career transitions data in the OpportuNext database.<sup>5</sup>

There is no single definition of SES. (See Appendix A for more information.) For the purposes of this discussion, we considered the nine SES from the O\*NET framework,<sup>6</sup> namely:

- active listening
- speaking
- complex problem-solving
- social perceptiveness
- service orientation
- instructing
- persuasion
- negotiation
- coordination skills<sup>7</sup>



1 Statistics Canada, "Tourism Human Resource Module, 2019."  
2 OTEC, Tourism & Hospitality Emergency Recovery, *Labour Force Survey*.  
3 Giammarco, Higham, and McKean, *The Future is Social and Emotional*.  
4 Hindle, Rao, and Gabler, *A Path Forward*.  
5 OpportuNext, "See Where Your Skills Can Take You."  
6 O\*NET Resource Center, "The O\*NET Content Model."  
7 Ibid.



Assessment and recognition of SES can help people better understand what skills they have and where they can improve. Understanding SES strengths and gaps within the T&H workforce can also drive larger-scale upskilling initiatives. There is an opportunity to implement a holistic approach to skills development that recognizes the talents of T&H workers and supports industry recovery efforts.

## SES development promotes transferability and mobility

Social and emotional skills have been identified as being in high demand among employers and as valuable assets that enable job transferability and movement both inside and outside of the T&H sector.<sup>8</sup> SES development emerges as a positive investment for both employers and employees. For example:

- Employees with strong SES have better overall employment outcomes.<sup>9</sup> They can better adapt to the changing labour market and are often selected for leadership positions in many organizations.<sup>10</sup>

- Unlike technical skills that might be limited to a specific profession, SES are recognized across many professions and equip workers with a valuable skill set that they can use throughout their careers.
- Jobs that require high levels of SES may be more immune to the potential negative impacts of automation. Although routine jobs and tasks are increasingly being replaced by technology, workers with high SES who can communicate that they deeply understand their role and the organization are less likely to have their jobs automated.<sup>11</sup>



8 Gorea and Fadila, *Searching for Strengths*.

9 Chernyshenko, Kankaraš, and Drasgow, *Social and Emotional Skills for Student Success and Well-Being*.

10 Giammarco, Higham, and McKean, *The Future Is Social and Emotional*.

11 Gustein and Sviokla, "7 Skills That Aren't About to Be Automated."

Acquiring higher levels of SES in the T&H industry will benefit career progression. A recent analysis of SES in T&H people manager jobs found that they require higher SES levels to direct staff and lead on monitoring customer service standards.<sup>12</sup> “Soft skill” intensive jobs are projected to increase from 59 per cent of employment in 2015 to 63 per cent by 2030.<sup>13</sup> Thus, people with strong SES will be in high demand, especially for jobs that require leadership, cultural competence, resiliency, problem-solving, collaboration, and communication.<sup>14</sup> Improvements in SES can also help some T&H workers in high-risk, low-mobility positions to transition to other occupations, such as hotel front desk clerks. This is good news for the T&H industry, as the above-mentioned SES are particularly prevalent among T&H workers with clear strengths in people-oriented skills.<sup>15</sup>

A focus on developing SES also has benefits beyond career advancement for individuals. For example, investments in this area can increase employee retention and positively impact workplace culture.<sup>16</sup> When employers train their employees in SES, it demonstrates the values of the company and ultimately instills a culture of tolerance, collaboration, and discipline. Improved communication and collaboration engender a greater understanding of differences, cultivating positive working relationships between employee and employer. Beyond the workplace, improved SES also contribute to increased community involvement and promote the overall well-being

of society. This is because citizens with improved social and emotional skills tend to be resourceful, respectful, and more tolerant and have good communication skills—contributing to both personal and collective welfare.<sup>17</sup> People with high SES work more collaboratively and are more productive, demonstrating that a focus on SES training may help reduce labour shortages and increase employee retention.<sup>18</sup> Given that labour shortages negatively impact business growth and success, investing in SES development can have long-term benefits for employers and employees both inside and outside the T&H sector.

## SES training is effective and accessible

Given the benefits of strong SES, it is important to understand how they can be developed. SES can be acquired while growing up through interactions with family, peers, school, and community.<sup>19</sup> However, SES can also be acquired and developed through lifelong training. There are a variety of SES delivery formats, including formal training, short courses, work-integrated learning, and on-the-job training. (See Appendix C for more details.)

<sup>12</sup> Gorea and Fadila, *Where Can I Help You?*

<sup>13</sup> O'Mahony and others, *Soft Skills for Business Success*.

<sup>14</sup> Giammarco, Higham, and McKean, *The Future Is Social and Emotional*.

<sup>15</sup> Gorea and Fadila, *Where Can I Help You?*

<sup>16</sup> Ibrahim, Boerhannoeddin, and Bakare, “The Effect of Soft Skills and Training Methodology on Employee Performance.”

<sup>17</sup> Kankaraš and Suarez-Alvarez, *Assessment Framework of the OECD Study*.

<sup>18</sup> Deming, “The Value of Soft Skills in the Labor Market.”

<sup>19</sup> Kautz and others, *Fostering and Measuring Skills*.



**SES can be acquired and developed through lifelong training through SES delivery formats, such as formal training, short courses, work-integrated learning, and on-the-job training.**





Although effective learning can take place in a number of different environments,<sup>20</sup> several barriers should be contemplated when determining how to implement SES training:

- Time investment: Unpaid hours for training can come at a financial cost for workers who would be otherwise earning wages during learning time. In addition to financial cost, workers may experience burnout or exhaustion related to chronic stress in the workplace<sup>21</sup> from engaging in increased working hours. However, research shows that workers in the educational industry with improved social and emotional skills have reduced incidence of burnout.<sup>22</sup> This demonstrates that SES improvement could be related to decreased burnout, offsetting the time investment and potential stress barrier of gaining SES training.
- Additional financial investment: While student financial aid is available for those who meet the requirements, tuition costs can create barriers for workers. For those with family responsibilities, the cost of child care during training time is an additional consideration. A significant gender-based inequality emerges when considering family responsibilities and child care: Statistics Canada data show that family responsibilities and child care roles tend to disproportionately fall to women.<sup>23</sup> This results in women spending an unequal amount of time engaging in this unpaid labour, adding further burden to the additional financial investment of SES training.
- Availability of training: Formal SES training programs and initiatives are not widely available in all jurisdictions in an “on demand” format. However, there is increased awareness of alternative and non-formal training channels such as work-integrated learning and on-the-job training.

SES can be more easily acquired and developed through interacting with others at work and hands-on experience than through structured training.<sup>24</sup> In the T&H industry, the level of human interaction required in many roles provides a ripe environment for hands-on learning and coaching. Using SES in service delivery triggers an emotional connection with guests and leads to either satisfaction or dissatisfaction, providing an immediate response for the worker.



20 Ibid.

21 Freudenberger, “Staff Burn-Out.”

22 D'Olympia, *The Relationship of Trait Emotional Intelligence*.

23 Moyser and Burlock, *Time Use*.

24 Grant, *Aligning Skills Development With Labour Market Need*.

Two examples of hands-on learning include on-the-job training and work-integrated learning (WIL). Workers often prefer on-the-job training, as there are fewer time and financial barriers. They are compensated for their time while learning new skills and there are no out-of-pocket costs. Employees involved in training can still contribute to workplace tasks and continue to be engaged with customers and colleagues. As there is usually no required coursework, on-the-job training creates mutual benefits:

- Employees receive training in a familiar environment without having to invest additional time in off-site programs.
- There is some expectation that SES upskilling will benefit the employer through increased customer satisfaction.
- The recruitment process in the industry serves a dual purpose. Workers are screened to ensure that they have both the required skills and the potential for on-the-job training. This is more effective for individuals than a multi-step process of applying for courses, completing training, and searching for a job.

Additionally, on-the-job training adheres to customer service standards set by employers. However, there are limitations to this approach. If training is too specific to the role and does not fully address SES, it can be difficult for the worker to acquire skills that can be used in other contexts.

While on-the-job training is often a preferred training channel, pandemic restrictions may limit the immediate opportunities for workers to gain SES on the job. To enable more infrastructure for sector-specific training, SES upskilling is also provided by consortia, associations, and agencies. The most effective skill training occurs when it is aligned with employers' needs and delivers the skills that are in demand in local labour markets.<sup>25</sup> An example is the UPSKILL project,<sup>26</sup> which included over 100 firms and trained 1,500 workers in the accommodation industry across Canada.

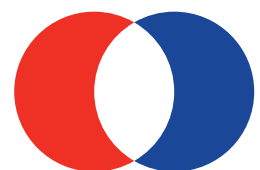
The effectiveness of on-the-job training in both SES and technical skills has spearheaded investments in work-integrated learning.<sup>27</sup> WIL is employer-provided, and includes paid co-ops and internships for students in post-secondary degree-and diploma-granting programs. In some cases, WIL also includes unpaid practicums. The focus on experiential learning helps students gain practical skills during their education. Studies have shown that students who participate in WIL are better prepared in terms of SES for the workforce.<sup>28</sup>

25 Myers, Harding, and Pasolli, *Skills Training That Works*.

26 Gyarmati and others, *UPSKILL*.

27 Bieler and others, *Work-Integrated Learning in the Post-COVID-19 World*.

28 Morneau Shepell, *Navigating Change*.



## SES development helps overcome challenges

The T&H sector faces several challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, technological disruptions, lower wages than many other sectors, labour shortages, and reputational challenges. These are exacerbated by the nature of most of its jobs, which are often perceived as “low” or “semi” skilled positions. The labels used to describe these roles are often problematic, as they imply a prescribed value of skills that are reflected in low wages. Key insights from the World Economic Forum 2021 panel on upskilling in the workforce suggest that workers in sectors such as tourism and hospitality have a 30 to 40 per cent less chance of getting training that will help them grow their skills.<sup>29</sup> Recognizing the value of skills and the intersection with wages is important for supporting worker progression. Training in SES can address these challenges and mitigate the impact on workers.

Due to pandemic restrictions and safety protocols, the tourism and hospitality sector is one of the industries hardest hit by COVID-19. In Ontario, employment in T&H in December 2020 was 79 per cent of the level in 2019.<sup>30</sup> As vaccines become more available in 2021, some subsectors, like the food and services industry, could recover by the end of the calendar year. Others, like the accommodations sector, are not projected to fully recover until 2022. A focus on SES such as active listening, problem-solving skills, and

service orientation, coupled with capabilities such as creativity and innovation, can help mitigate recovery challenges. Effective and accessible SES training will support the T&H sector in building capacity to meet the expected demand. Workers can use their SES and related skills to reimagine operations and services with current employers as well as increase their employability within the T&H sector or outside of it.

SES can also help workers and employers adapt to technological trends in the sector.<sup>31</sup> The link between SES and digital skills has been explored extensively, often with the conclusion that SES enables the adoption of technology.<sup>32</sup> For example, SES such as complex problem-solving and instructing can help T&H workers become familiar with technology tools such as reservation systems and housekeeping tracking software. As well, strong SES can help employees adapt to the increasing use of delivery applications such as Uber, which is putting significant pressure on workers to learn how to use different platforms while also providing services within limited time constraints. Workers who perform occupations that are at high risk of automation can benefit from SES training that develops their digital skills.

Wage gaps are also a challenge for the T&H industry. People with high SES tend to be more highly paid than those with low SES.<sup>33</sup> However, the current average wage in the T&H industry is below the industrial average, with the hourly compensation gap between tourism jobs and overall jobs in the economy quantified at \$12.08

29 Bundock and others, “Skilling the Global Workforce.”

30 OTEC, Tourism & Hospitality Emergency Recovery, *Labour Force Survey*.

31 Bieler, *Rising Skills*.

32 van Laar and others, “The Relation Between 21st-Century Skills and Digital Skills.”

33 Deming, *The Growing Importance of Social Skills in the Labor Market*.



in 2019.<sup>34</sup> This is because a larger share of T&H jobs are in lower-paying subsectors such as food and beverage services (\$18.33 average hourly pay) and accommodation (\$22.33 average hourly rate).<sup>35</sup> This disparity in compensation reduces people's interest in pursuing careers in the T&H industry. However, increasing SES among T&H workers may present an opportunity for them to move into roles that require higher levels of SES. Roles with higher SES requirements may have higher compensation levels depending on other factors, including labour market demand for talent.

## Micro-credentials for SES training and recognition

Wage gaps are exacerbated by the lack of SES recognition and assessment. Many T&H front-line workers enter the labour market without any post-secondary education or certification. While low barriers to entry to the sector may benefit them initially, workers often do not perceive jobs in the industry as a "career." Instead, T&H jobs are considered either survival work or placeholder positions while employees pursue education and other more lucrative opportunities.<sup>36</sup> For the T&H industry, classifying employees as "skilled" and "unskilled" workers is accepting historically rooted occupational classifications,<sup>37</sup> which does not help.

An industry-wide system for assessing and recognizing SES would help bridge credentialing gaps and elevate perceptions about the industry. Workers in this industry have many skills that are overlooked, as there are few mechanisms to recognize these skills beyond traditional markers such as educational attainment and job seniority. For example, tourism services are generally provided through a range of highly developed interpersonal, communication (social), and emotional skills.<sup>38</sup> These SES are less likely to be formally developed or recognized through established training channels than are technical and functional skills. The lack of documentation means that people may be unaware of the value of these skills or be unable to articulate or demonstrate that they have them.

As participation in formal programs requires an investment of time and finances that is often a barrier to T&H workers, a promising pathway is micro-credentials. Micro-credentials are defined as "a representation of learning, awarded for completion of a short program that is focused on a discrete set of competencies (i.e., skills, knowledge, attributes) and is sometimes related to other credentials."<sup>39</sup> Short, skill-based programs can deliver, assess, and certify SES training to improve worker performance and productivity. They can also address situational troubles (such as missing credentials and reputational challenges) that have an impact on wages.<sup>40</sup>

34 Statistics Canada, "Tourism Human Resource Module, 2019."

35 Ibid.

36 Murray and others, "Human Resource Challenges in Canada's Hospitality and Tourism Industry."

37 Burns, "Hard-Skills, Soft-Skills."

38 Nedry, "Go Hard on Soft Service Skills."

39 Pichette and others, *Making Sense of Microcredentials*.

40 Adhvaryu, Kala, and Nyshadham, *The Skills to Pay the Bills*.



Micro-credentials hold tremendous potential value for employers, workers in transition, and upskilling initiatives. Yet, more infrastructure is needed to ensure that such credentials are recognized as a valid training and assessment mechanism. This requires a common provincial framework with a shared understanding of quality markers and industry relevance.<sup>41</sup> In fact, “cost and perceived value by industry were the biggest concerns about microcredentials” according to survey results of 2,300 working-age Canadians, employers, and PSI leaders.<sup>42</sup>

Training programs and resulting micro-credentials must be recognized by employers as valuable, as post-secondary institutions (PSIs) have an important role to play as delivery partners. It will be important to foster a sense of joint innovation (between industry and PSIs) and focus on competence rather than traditional PSI program metrics such as course duration, which can impede hands-on training options. It will also be critical to identify PSIs that prioritize SES, as these are often not a strategic priority despite their utility in the future of work. Only one in five PSIs had holistic SES development in their strategic plans.<sup>43</sup> Most PSIs have relegated SES to extra-curricular activities such as academic clubs, volunteer work, and community service.

Short, skill-based micro-credentials can also improve employee retention and career aspirations. Canada’s T&H industry has historically faced labour shortages<sup>44</sup> as it deals with attracting potential workers to and retaining employees within the sector. It is estimated that the average turnover in this sector in Canada is 70 to 80 per cent for regular full-time workers, with turnover as high as 100 per cent among hourly workers.<sup>45</sup>


41 Pichette and others, *Making Sense of Microcredentials*.

42 Ibid.

43 Giammarco, Higham, and McKean, *Social and Emotional Skills*.

44 Murray and others, “Human Resource Challenges in Canada’s Hospitality and Tourism Industry.”

45 Cormier, Landine, and Rivera, *A Review of the Literature*.

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a white button-down shirt and a white face mask, is talking on a black corded telephone. She is standing in what appears to be a hotel front desk or office. In the background, there is a computer monitor and some papers. The lighting is soft, coming from a window on the right. The overall tone is professional and focused.

**Improvements in SES can help some tourism and hospitality workers in high-risk, low-mobility positions to transition to other occupations, such as hotel front desk clerks.**





Stakeholders can address this problem by developing measures that make T&H a viable career option for youth and investing in skills programming. Based on a survey in 2018,<sup>46</sup> 94 per cent of workers will stay with a company that has invested in their career through training opportunities. This is also true for training in SES. For example, when organizations provide their personnel with sufficient training in emotional intelligence, they gain staff members who function more efficiently, cooperate more productively, and remain with the company longer.<sup>47</sup>

## SES assessment platforms should focus on development

SES assessment is still in the early stages of development. The lack of consistency among researchers and practitioners in defining SES makes it difficult to determine the best way to measure them. Large organizations use several SES assessment platforms to ensure that their employees have the right skills.<sup>48</sup> These platforms allow individuals and organizations to measure the skills and abilities of employees and determine whether they can adequately perform assigned tasks. Some platforms can be used to measure, train, and provide certification for SES. Others can be used only to measure skills.

There is currently no tool used across the T&H industry that objectively assesses SES levels in workers to ensure they have the skills needed to adequately perform their jobs.

To become a leading force in SES development and make the sector more attractive, an SES assessment platform for T&H should include assessment, training/retraining, and micro-credentialing. One way to acknowledge the multi-dimensional skill sets of T&H workers is to establish a common assessment tool. In the absence of other skill “signals” such as training credentials and work experience, a platform used throughout the industry can increase SES recognition and worker mobility. More than ever, it is important to ensure that workers have the skills that employers and clients need during a time of industry disruption and recovery.

Although there is no common platform used across the T&H industry, employers in various sectors look to several online platforms to assess SES. These platforms vary in terms of the SES measured, purpose of the platform, and methods used in assessing SES. We reviewed 10 platforms that offer SES assessment and categorized them into three groups:

1. platforms that focus mainly on SES
2. platforms that incorporate SES as part of several skills to be assessed in the hiring process
3. free platforms that provide self-assessment tools

<sup>46</sup> Spar and Dye, “Workplace Learning Report.”

<sup>47</sup> Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*.

<sup>48</sup> Ajunwa and Greene, “Platforms at Work.”

For details on the various SES assessed by the tools reviewed, see Appendix B. Out of the 10 platforms reviewed, we recommend three (all from group 1) for further consideration and selection, namely:

- Employability Skills Assessment Tool (ESAT)
- Institute for Health and Human Potential's (IHHP) EI360 Assessment
- TalentSmart's Emotional Intelligence Appraisal

## **Group 1: SES assessment and development**

The first group of platforms is intended for SES assessment and development only and is not designed for hiring purposes. They intend to measure SES levels with the goal of improving or developing them. These platforms will be useful for assessing and training workers with the desired skills for service delivery. They can also support micro-credentialing. Participants who enroll and complete the platform's program can receive a certificate of completion.

Tools that fall into this category include the Employability Skills Assessment Tool (ESAT), the Institute for Health and Human Potential's (IHHP) EI360 Assessment, and TalentSmart's EI Appraisal. All these platforms provide SES assessment and training solutions by taking a formative approach to SES assessment. The tools manage subjectivity in SES assessment by gathering input from multiple sources, namely, the worker (self), peers, and the coach. The self-assessment takes place first, with an opportunity for the worker to compare their perspective with insights from others. This offers a comparative approach to understanding and targeting SES strengths and weaknesses. Group 1 platforms

also provide SES training solutions and reassessment aimed at helping people know and understand their SES levels, enabling skill awareness and areas for improvement.

While all the platforms in this group could be used for the T&H sector, ESAT might be the most appropriate. The ESAT platform covers the greatest number of individual skills (nine)—motivation, attitude, accountability, time management, stress management, presentation, teamwork, adaptability, and confidence. In addition to SES skills that are generally assessed, the ESAT platform offers 40 other skills that could be added to the existing set. This allows for a more expansive and inclusive understanding of SES strengths and limitations. IHHP EI360 and TalentSmart's EI Appraisal do not focus on broader social skills and thus offer a potentially narrower conceptualization of SES. ESAT's current clients include businesses in the T&H sector in Canada. ESAT and IHHP are used by government agencies across Canada, while TalentSmart's clients are mostly American. Among the three tools, ESAT is the least expensive. For \$700 per year, an organization can assess up to 250 employees.

## **Group 2: SES recruitment and talent management**

The second group of platforms incorporates SES assessment in recruitment and talent management. Examples of such platforms include MeritTrac, iMocha, Pymetrics, Harver, and The Predictive Index. This group of platforms focus solely on self-assessment. SES are part of several skills available for assessment based on the role under recruitment. SES training available

to participants who are hired through these platforms may be limited, as the training covers a breadth of skills. Recruiters use tools like these to assess candidates beyond interviews.<sup>49</sup> However, the types of tools designed for assessing skills for a job might not be the best ones for SES development. Additionally, despite best practices in testing, hiring assessment tools are not always accurate.<sup>50</sup>

While platforms in Group 2 may not be ideal for the current purpose of assessing, developing, and improving SES for the T&H sector, a platform like Pymetrics could be useful for large T&H businesses that wish to streamline their hiring processes. Pymetrics approaches SES assessment using games. This approach facilitates data collection on how individuals “read” situations and make judgments. Gamification also creates a more objective way of measuring skill levels compared to other self-assessments that suffer from subjective bias. Gaming tools like Pymetrics may be useful for businesses in the sector that wish to identify complex problem-solving skills for specific roles in their operations.

### **Group 3: Free online SES self-assessment**

The third group of platforms offers online SES self-assessment based on a “freemium” model, where some features are available at no cost. Users can purchase additional features and resources. Examples are Psychology Today and Mind Tools. Highlights include the following:

- Use of Psychology Today’s assessment tool is free, along with a short report produced for the user. However, for a small fee (US\$4.95–\$15), participants can gain access to a detailed report.
- Mind Tools offers a short situational-based self-assessment and a scoring rubric to interpret results. In addition, Mind Tools has free learning resources for improving skills. Extensive access to training resources is provided for a subscription of \$35 per month. However, the platform does not include SES assessment locally. Users are directed to external sources for assessment.

Based on our understanding of these two tools, we recommend Mind Tools for individuals in the sector who might want to know their SES levels and are able to independently learn and develop these skills. We do not recommend these tools for direct implementation in the T&H sector because there is limited support for large-scale implementation. Further, there is no robust mechanism to evaluate the impact of assessment on skills development, as is the case with tools offered in groups 1 and 2 and other platforms.

49 Nisbett, “Why Job Interviews Are Pointless.”

50 Davies and McDonald, *The Science Behind Predicting Job Performance at Recruitment*.





An important difference between the platforms included in groups 2 and 3 compared to group 1 is that those in groups 2 and 3 do not allow for the choice between coach and/or peer assessment and self-assessment. The option for multi-role assessment allows for a variety of different voices and perspectives for the user, potentially enabling a more credible approach to understanding SES.

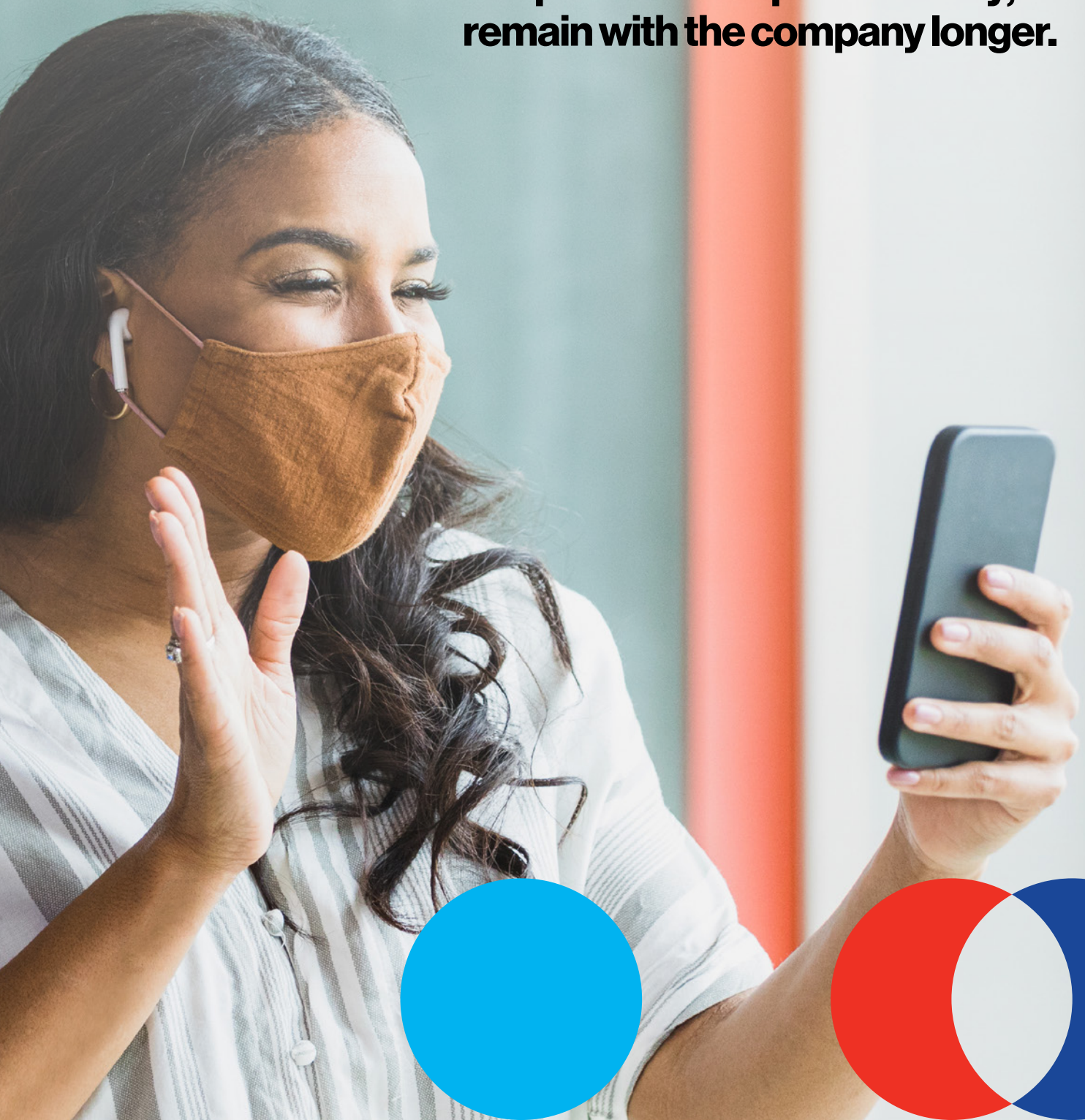
## Next steps

SES are particularly valuable in the T&H industry. Working toward a standardized and unified definition of SES will improve employability for people working in the sector, particularly those who do not hold formal education credentials or have a longer work history. The T&H sector can emerge as a leader by providing tools for recognizing and assessing SES; promote hands-on training; and increase job mobility. Through SES upskilling, there is potential for T&H

workers to contribute to the industry's recovery efforts, navigate technological disruptions, and progress in their careers. T&H industry associations can take a leadership role in these efforts in collaboration with training providers and employers.

To help define learning goals, standardize training initiatives, and create a shared understanding of SES initiatives, it would be useful to build common assessment rubrics and models in partnership with training providers and T&H industry associations. It would also be advantageous for T&H industry associations to work with PSIs to create specific SES micro-credentials. Indeed, there is a unique opportunity to create a valuable product. Most traditional T&H-oriented PSI programs in Ontario offer courses in communication, leadership, critical thinking, and teamwork—all part of SES. However, many courses focus only on teamwork and communication, exposing a gap in training for other areas that make up SES such as service orientation, negotiation, social perceptiveness, and persuasion. An association's selection of a technology tool, in collaboration with training providers, will facilitate the assessment of skills gaps and provide the groundwork for micro-credential delivery.

**Organizations that provide their personnel with emotional intelligence training gain staff who function more efficiently, cooperate more productively, and remain with the company longer.**





To understand workforce needs, the T&H industry associations could take the following steps with input from training providers:

1. Determine the appropriate platform for the sector. Based on our analysis, we recommend further exploration of ESAT, IHHP, and EI Appraisal.
2. Once a platform has been selected, pilot the platform with target groups from different T&H subsectors. This will help determine whether the assessment and training meet the needs of the various subsectors.
3. Evaluate the platform through feedback from participants who took part in the pilot project. The feedback received on the pilot project will help develop a plan for mass deployment across the sector.

Continued stakeholder collaboration with employers, PSIs, and other training providers in the T&H industry is essential for understanding the skills needed to respond to automation and dynamic labour trends. Industry-led training that focuses on in-demand skills will be critical for recovery. Through these initiatives, the T&H sector can contribute to a sustainable future that recognizes and leverages the talent of its workforce. The Conference Board of Canada continues to prioritize research on SES, as elevating what makes us “human” will benefit industries in transition.





# Appendix A

# Methodology

## Background

As a response to pandemic disruption to the tourism and hospitality (T&H) industry, the Ontario Tourism Education Corporation (OTEC) launched the Tourism and Hospitality Emergency Response (THER) project—“a job recovery plan for workers and workplaces to assist people who have lost their jobs or are working fewer hours due to the COVID-19 pandemic.”<sup>51</sup> One project priority is to identify transferable SES and ways they can be credentialed or recognized. The Conference Board of Canada is leading the preliminary work in this area and is working with OTEC to develop future projects on social and emotional skills (SES), to enable a common understanding of SES, their role in the T&H workplace, and how both individuals and the industry at large can better position these skills, and their development, as a unique competitive advantage in the Canadian economy.

Our work on SES aims to facilitate the transition of tourism and hospitality workers to new roles by:

1. identifying the value of a focus on SES recognition for both employees (i.e., career success of tourism and hospitality workers) and employers (i.e., more effective workforce development/talent management strategies);
2. identifying general SES gaps and strengths across occupations;
3. identifying appropriate SES assessment frameworks and evidence-based approaches to assessment and platforms that can support SES “credentialing” or profiles.

This impact paper focuses on items 1 and 3 through a review of both internal and external SES literature. We drew from our previous research on SES-related studies with a focus on tourism and hospitality. External literature was drawn from academic databases with a focus on research papers on social and emotional skills, soft skills, human skills, or emotional intelligence in the T&H sector. A previously released report, *Searching for Strengths: Gaps and Opportunities for Social and Emotional Skills Development in the Tourism and Hospitality Sector*, addressed item 2.

51 OTEC, “We’re Here to Help You Get Ready.”

## SES definitions

To complete this work, we examined the literature on SES. To ensure our review was comprehensive, we applied a range of systematic literature search strategies, including structured, subject-based, keyword, and phrase searches.

We focused on research papers on social and emotional skills, soft skills, human skills, or emotional intelligence in the T&H sector. To narrow the definition of SES, we examined several different perspectives. SES is described as soft skills, human skills, emotional intelligence,<sup>52</sup> and employability skills.<sup>53</sup>

A review of the most researched SES in the tourism and hospitality industry identified communication, leadership, problem-solving, interpersonal, personality development, teamwork, positive attitude, customer service, professional and ethical standards, personnel management, time-management, and decision-making skills<sup>54</sup> as the most important employability skills in the industry.

The SES most in demand in Canada are leadership, resilience, communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and interpersonal skills.<sup>55</sup> In the hospitality and tourism sector, the most important SES are active listening, speaking, service orientation, emotional, and interpersonal skills.<sup>56</sup>

After exploring the applicability of numerous definitions, we adopted the specific SES set from the O\*NET framework due to the quantifiable analysis undertaken in our previous research. Table 1 illustrates the nine skills as defined by O\*NET.

We chose to use this SES definition to support consistency with our previous sector research. Deliverables included data analysis of SES in specific T&H occupations and mapped job transitions.

**Table 1**  
**SES descriptions**

SES	Description
Active listening	Understanding the implications of new information for both current and future problem-solving and decision-making.
Speaking	Conveying information to others effectively through talking.
Coordination	Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.
Social perceptiveness	Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.
Complex problem-solving	Recognizing complex problems and using related information to come up with and implement effective solutions.
Service orientation	Actively looking for ways to help people.
Instructing	Teaching others.
Persuasion	Encouraging others to change their minds or behaviour.
Negotiation	Bringing others together to reconcile differences.

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

52 Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*.

53 Dhaliwal and Misra, "Employability Skills Needed in Hospitality Industry."

54 Ibid.

55 Giammarco, Higham, and McKean, *The Future Is Social and Emotional*.

56 Crawford and Weber, "Developing Soft Skills for Future Hospitality Leaders."

# Appendix B

## Description of platforms

The search for assessment platforms focused on SES tools that support group assessment and training rather than individual assessment. Information on assessment platforms was collected from publicly available information on the platforms and interactions with representatives of four platforms (iMocha, ESAT, IHHP EI360, and TalentSmart's EI Appraisal). We were unable to speak with representatives of the other six platforms despite several attempts to do so.

### Group 1: SES assessment and development

#### Employability Skills Assessment Tool (ESAT)

##### Description:

The Employability Skills Assessment Tool (ESAT) offers a framework and assessment methodology for improving key social and emotional skills. This includes skills such as "collaboration, motivation, creativity, attitude, accountability, time management, stress management, presentation, adaptability, communication, and confidence."<sup>57</sup> It is based on the soft skills assessment developed by Stephen Gibb.

Once they have purchased a licence, users can choose from over 40 pre-existing ESAT skills to develop their assessment. Alternatively, users can develop their own skill descriptions for specific SES and their associated applications. To manage the subjectivity in SES assessment, ESAT triangulates scores from different sources including peers, co-workers, family members, supervisors, and instructors. The platform has two different sets of questions for participants and raters. The platform is designed as a formative assessment tool to be used for pre- and post-measurement in the SES learning process. Participants in the program are usually not given the assessment scores; instead, they are shown a graph depicting their scores in relation to their SES goals during debriefing. The platform has businesses in the hospitality sector on its client list.

- Methodology: Self-assessment, peer assessment, and coach assessment
- Timeline: Between two days and three weeks
- Data storage: Assessment data are stored on ESAT's secure cloud server and can be made available to clients on request. It is also possible to connect a portal from ESAT's server to an organization's internal platform.
- User group: 12 years and above
- Language: English and French, with other language options in the preliminary stages of development
- Cost: \$700/250 participants

<sup>57</sup> Futureworx, "Employability Skills Assessment Tool."

## TalentSmartEQ

### Description:

The Emotional Intelligence Appraisal from TalentSmartEQ measures emotional intelligence and helps people develop their skills by delivering constructive feedback and effective strategies for improvement. The platform was developed based on the book *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*.<sup>58</sup> Scores on the assessment come from a “normed sample.” That means that your scores are based on a comparison with the global population to discover where you fall in each skill area. Scores are defined as follows: 90–100, “a strength to capitalize on”; 80–89, “a strength to build on”; 70–79, “with little improvement, this could be a strength”; 60–69, “something you should work on”; 69 and below, “a concern you must address.” Each participant is provided with the top three emotional quotient (EQ) strategies for improvement based upon their unique scoring. Additionally, participants are provided with 16 e-learning materials to help develop their EQ skill areas of self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, and relationship management. Lastly, TalentSmartEQ’s online portal provides an opportunity to create and share a development plan as well as a free re-test of the self-assessment edition of *Emotional Intelligence Appraisal—Me Edition*. Also, the 360-degree assessment use coaches to leverage scholarly research in the fields of emotional intelligence and leadership to help clients become more skilled. It is widely used for different sectors, including health care workers, teachers, and military personnel. The platform creators insist the platform is not a hiring tool and advise clients not to use it for that purpose. The tool is meant to help people become aware of and develop their emotional intelligence skills.

- Methodology: Self-assessment, peer assessment, and coach assessment
- Timeline: This 28-question assessment takes, on average, 8–10 minutes to complete.
- Data storage: Secured local server
- User group: 18 years and over
- Language: English, Spanish, French, Japanese, German, Chinese (traditional & simplified)
- Cost: \$49–\$329

<sup>58</sup> Bradberry and Greaves, *Emotional Intelligence 2.0*.

<sup>59</sup> Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence*.

## IHHP’s EI360 Assessment

### Description:

The EI360 is a 360-degree tool designed to assess the emotional competencies of individuals. It is based on the emotional intelligence model developed by Dr. J. P. and Elizabeth Pawliw-Fry and Dan Goleman’s<sup>59</sup> work. The EI360 covers assessment and fundamentals of emotional intelligence training. The platform can be used by individuals who want to know their emotional intelligence level as well as by corporations to train their employees in emotional intelligence. This model of EI consists of three main areas for leadership development—self-awareness, emotional management, and emotional connection. Eleven core competencies support these three key areas of performance and leadership. The EI360 evaluates people on all 11 competencies: self-awareness (self-assessment, emotional self-awareness, self-regard, optimism); emotional management (impulse control, adaptable/flexible, authenticity, personal drive); and emotional connection (empathy, communication, coaching others). The tool offers training modules for preparing people for leadership positions. The platform is currently being used to train both provincial and federal government workers, including employees of the ministry of transportation.

Participants in the program can select up to 15 people to provide assessment on their emotional intelligence skills.

- Methodology: Self assessment, peer assessment, supervisor and coach assessment
- Timeline: 2–10 hours
- Data storage: Third-party organization; data are kept for up to 18 months.
- User group: Adults
- Language: English and French
- Cost: \$645–\$1,295 per person + taxes



## Group 2: SES recruitment and talent management

### Pymetrics

#### Description:

The platform gathers data from employees in real time to give an unfettered view of each individual's innate behaviours and strengths. It evaluates soft skills such as decision-making, focus, effort, risk tolerance, attention, and more with a single gamified assessment. During game play, Pymetrics collects behavioural metrics to understand how workers approach specific scenarios. This enables a more dynamic and accurate assessment of people's behaviour.<sup>60</sup> Pymetrics developed their game-based assessments using academic peer-reviewed literature from the field of neuroscience.<sup>61</sup> They combined this with extensive research to support the tool's overall relevance and transferability and to ensure they are effectively measuring people's soft skills.

- Methodology: Games
- Timeline: 25 minutes
- Data storage: Unknown
- User group: Adults
- Language: English
- Cost: Unknown

### iMocha

#### Description:

iMocha is a skills-assessment platform that allows organizations to examine skills proficiency among recruitment participants on many topics, including customer-focus competency, emotional intelligence, and decision-making. The platform uses situational questions where the answers are given points. It allows customization in the types of skills to be assessed, the level of difficulty, and the questions used. The questions are created according to the requirements and proficiency level of the participants. They are designed by three subject experts who also act as peer reviewers. Experts are hired based on their years of experience on the topic—usually eight years and over. There are no right or wrong answers. Scores are graded as beginner, 25; intermediate, 50; experienced, 75; and proficient, 100. Users get reports of their actual scores; scores are shared with those candidates who get hired. The assessment platform is for hiring purposes for business and does not support individual assessment. However, the external platform for upskilling is available for individual upskilling purposes and costs \$30 to \$80 per year. Clients include the United Nations, Ernst & Young, and the World Food Program. The platform supports translation into 90 different languages, including English and French.

- Methodology: Situational self-assessment
- Timeline: 5–40 minutes on each test
- Data storage: Unknown
- User group: Adults
- Language: 90 languages
- Cost: \$1,800–\$6,000

<sup>60</sup> Spence, "What Will Drive the Future of HR?"

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

## MeritTrac

### Description:

MeritTrac is a behavioural and personality evaluation tool designed for work-related skills assessment. Skills assessed include “workplace thinking style, willingness to learn, leadership capabilities, generic personality, sales situational personality, and customer service orientation.”<sup>62</sup> The platform includes components for hiring people with the right skills, identifying leadership potential in employees, addressing career progression and attrition, and enabling succession planning. The assessment has been developed based on validated frameworks such as the Big Five Personality test, the Holland Career Interest Inventory, the Blake Mouton Managerial Grid, and Herzberg’s motivation model to help organizations understand an individual’s behaviour and social skills.

- Methodology: Self-assessment
- Data storage: Unknown
- Timeline: Unknown
- User group: Adults
- Language: English
- Cost: Unknown

## Harver

### Description:

Harver uses the HEXACO Personality Inventory, which is based on the Big Five model, to assess candidates on six-dimensions of human personality.<sup>63</sup> This six-dimensional model includes honesty-humility (H), emotionality (E), extraversion (X), agreeableness (A), conscientiousness (C), and openness to experience (O).<sup>64</sup> Based on worker recruitment needs, Harver’s personality questionnaire can be offered as either 60 or 100 questions. This choice allows industries to select whether they would like to get to know a

candidate’s key personality traits or learn more in-depth detail about potential candidates. Results from the personality test are cross-referenced with personality traits and key characteristics of high-performing employees to look for potential correlations.

In addition to the personality questionnaire, candidates’ cognition and problem-solving skills are evaluated using a game-based approach that challenges their “ability to deconstruct patterns, test their numerical reasoning, and assess their ability to identify new relationships and patterns.”<sup>65</sup> This assesses a candidate’s abilities to manage difficult situations, identify patterns, and find answers to challenging problems.

Candidates are also assessed on everyday situational judgment tests. These tests are role-specific and are based on hypothetical scenarios that could be expected in the role. Candidates are asked to identify what they believe to be the most suitable response. This test is helpful for assessing a candidate’s behavioural tendencies and predicting how someone would respond in situations.

The combination of the personality questionnaire, cognition test, and situational judgment test allows industries to evaluate candidates based on their performance on the evaluations. This controls for potential unconscious biases for “specific backgrounds, experiences, or a specific gut-feeling about a candidate that can be inherently biased and prejudiced”<sup>66</sup> that might affect the hiring process.

- Methodology: Games
- Timeline: Unknown
- Data storage: Unknown
- User group: Adults
- Language: English
- Cost: Unknown

62 MeritTrac, “Behavioural Assessment Test.”

63 Harver, “Personality Questionnaire.”

64 Harver, “How KPMG NL Transformed its Recruitment Process.”

65 Ibid.

66 Ibid.

## The Predictive Index

### Description:

The platform uses psychometrics to measure mental capacities and processes. It applies and investigates theories of personality and cognitive ability to build tools that measure people's underlying traits and abilities. The assessment provides insights into an employee's behaviours and motivations by identifying and categorizing workplace behaviours. It involves selecting terms that best describe how people think the employee should behave and terms that best describe the individual's typical behaviour. After the assessment, the employee is matched to a profile that describes the person's strengths, drivers, and blind spots. The platform has 17 profiles.

- Methodology: Self-assessment
- Timeline: 6 minutes
- Data storage: Unknown
- User group: Adults
- Language: English
- Cost: Unknown

## Group 3: Free online SES self-assessment

## Mind Tools

### Description:

Mind Tools is an online resource that provides access to more than 2,400 contents, including articles, podcasts, videos, infographics, quizzes, book insights, expert interviews, and more. Mind Tools' in-house content team uses academic research, reliable sources, and expert advice to regularly update or produce new resources. Their SES assessment is a simple scenario-based self-assessment that can be completed in a few minutes. Based on the answers given in the assessment, participants get a score of their emotional intelligence and a rubric to explain what the scores mean.

- Methodology: Self-assessment
- Timeline: 5 minutes
- Data storage: Unknown
- User group: Adults
- Language: English
- Cost: Free

## Psychology Today

### Description:

This is a free online platform that can be used to test a variety of situations such as career, health, IQ, personality, and relationships. The career test consists of 25 individual tests that include critical problem-solving, leadership, time management, integrity and work ethics, negotiating skills, and team orientation. After each test, the user receives a free snapshot report with a summary evaluation and graph. The participant also has the option of buying the full results for between \$5 and \$15.

- Methodology: Self-assessment.
- Timeline: 5–40 minutes on each test
- Data storage: Unknown
- User group: Adults
- Language: English
- Cost: Free

# Appendix C

## SES acquisition methods

Type	Description
Formal training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courses are incorporated into the formal education curriculum.</li> <li>• The tourism and hospitality bachelor's program at Algonquin College<sup>67</sup> offers courses in communication, critical thinking, and interpersonal communication, among others.</li> </ul>
Short courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Courses range in length from a few hours to a few weeks.</li> <li>• For example, OTEC offers training modules (Service Excellence and Leadership Excellence series) that can be taken individually or together.</li> <li>• Courses taught include communication, leadership, team building, and overcoming difficulties. (For details <a href="#">click here</a>.)</li> </ul>
Work-integrated learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These are employer-provided, paid co-op internships for students in post-secondary degree and diploma programs in tourism and hospitality.</li> <li>• The focus is on experiential learning to help students gain practical skills during their education.</li> </ul>
On-the-job training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SES are acquired through on-the-job training as a part of assigned workplace tasks.</li> <li>• SES are acquired and developed through interaction with others at work through experiential learning more than structured training.<sup>68</sup></li> <li>• The effectiveness of on-the-job training in both SES and technical skills has spearheaded investments in work-integrated learning.<sup>69</sup></li> </ul>
Associations/agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OTEC's academic programs provide public and private sector educators with flexible, cost-effective, and innovative curricula from secondary school to post-secondary and post-graduate levels.<sup>70</sup></li> <li>• Tourism HR Canada is a pan-Canadian organization that offers courses with certification aimed at building a well-trained workforce for the T&amp;H sector.</li> </ul>

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

67 Algonquin College, Bachelor of Hospitality and Tourism Management (Honours) (Co-op).

68 Grant, *Aligning Skills Development With Labour Market Need*.

69 Bieler and others, *Work-Integrated Learning in the Post-COVID-19 World*.

70 OTEC, "Training Solutions."



# Appendix D

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OTEC is a not-for-profit organization that delivers skills training, consulting, research, and insight—guiding workforce strategy and evidence-based investment for a wide variety of industries, businesses, and destinations.

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## Finding Value: Identifying and Assessing Social and Emotional Skills in the Tourism and Hospitality Industry

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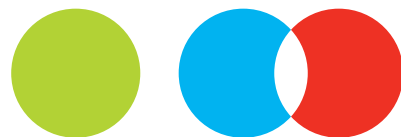
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