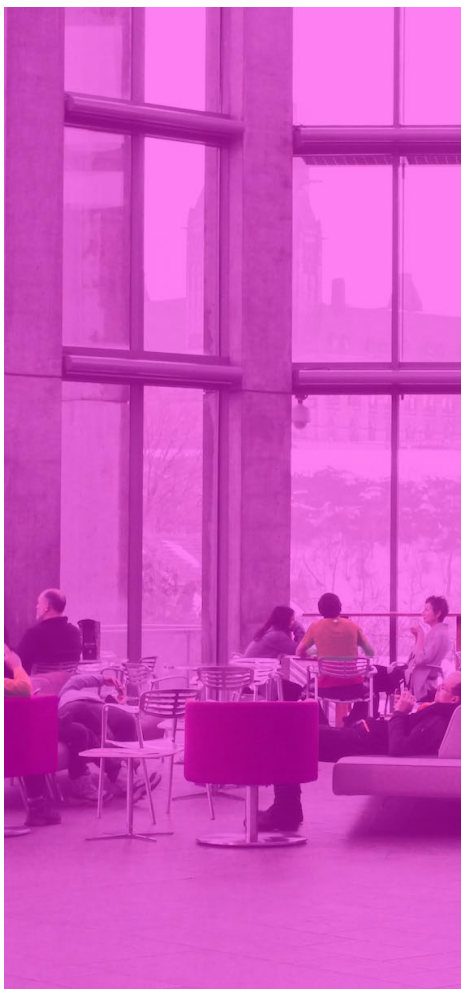


Searching for Strengths

Gaps and Opportunities for Social and
Emotional Skills Development in the
Tourism and Hospitality Sector





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.

The Future Skills Centre was founded by a consortium whose members are Ryerson University, Blueprint, and The Conference Board of Canada.

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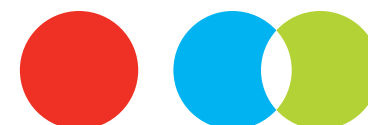
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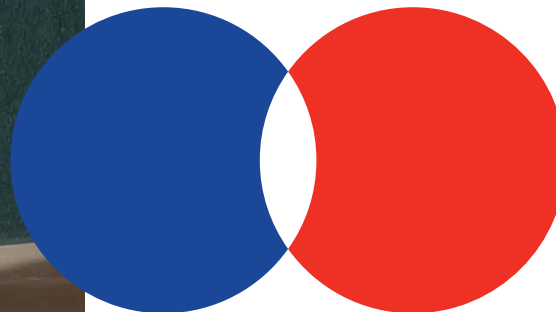
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Key findings

- Within the tourism and hospitality sector, travel service occupations have strong social and emotional skills, indicating that workers in this sector have clear skills strengths.
- Active listening is the standout social emotional skill for tourism and hospitality occupations, reflecting the significance and strength of customer service skills in these roles.
- People in managerial roles have stronger social and emotional skills because of their need to communicate effectively with staff and customers.
- Among groups with occupations at high risk of automation and low mobility of job transfer, hotel front desk clerks have strengths in social and emotional skills that may support opportunities for job transitions.
- The least transferable tourism and hospitality occupations have the lowest social emotional skills with the fewest potential transition options. Investments should be made in training to provide a clear path to target and improve these gaps.



Introduction

The tourism and hospitality (T&H) sector was hit especially hard by the pandemic. The International Monetary Fund reported that the industry “will continue to struggle until people feel safe to travel en masse again.”¹ In the Canadian context, the unemployment rate in the T&H sector reached 18.6 per cent in January 2021, up by 12.8 percentage points from January 2020.²

Helping displaced workers in the sector find new and meaningful employment is crucial to both the people who have been directly affected and the broader economic recovery.

Our previous research identified social and emotional skills (SES) as both in high demand among employers³ and highly transferable between roles.⁴ Strong SES can also improve a person’s ability to transition between roles—what is known as “employment resiliency.”⁵ This finding is based on our career transitions assessments developed as part of our OpportuNext database, which helps people “explore skill-based career pathways.”⁶

Understanding the prevalence of these skills among displaced T&H workers is important to support the economic recovery and highlight opportunities for career transitions within the industry. There is optimism among industry leaders that this sector will come back strong, with more jobs and transition options than ever before.⁷ Analysis of SES can help people better understand what skills they may bring to roles outside the T&H sector. It may also support retraining programs for those who choose to remain in the sector.



1 Behsudi, “Wish You Were Here.”

2 Tourism HR Canada, “Ongoing Tourism Job Losses Will Impede Recovery Efforts.”

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

4 Hindle, Rao, and Gabler, *A Path Forward*.

5 Ibid.

6 OpportuNext, “See Where Your Skills Can Take You.”

7 Rodrigues, “Toronto Lost \$8.35B in Tourist Activity.”

What are SES?

Definitions for SES vary, but they are associated with employability, leadership, cultural competence, problem-solving, resiliency, collaboration, and communication. We define SES as nine specific skills from the O*NET framework, which is the “primary source of occupational information” in the United States.^{8,9} (See Appendix B for descriptions.) They are:

- active listening
- speaking
- coordination
- social perceptiveness
- complex problem-solving
- service orientation
- instructing
- persuasion
- negotiation

SES at work

The SES scores indicate the degree of need and level of a particular skill in performing a job.¹⁰ For more information on methodology, please see Appendix B. We compared the scores that are required to do the job for T&H occupations for these nine SES across all sectors.

Of the nine skills, none shows an average score of 50 or higher (on the scale of 0–100) across T&H jobs. This is comparable across all other jobs, with none showing an average score above 50. This indicates that the average need for SES across T&H jobs ranges between moderate and low, with 50 and above classified as a high score. However, specific T&H roles require higher levels of SES and certain types of these skills are of above-average importance among occupations in the sector.



8 O*NET Resource Center, “The O*NET Content Model.”
9 O*NET Resource Center, “About O*NET.”

10 O*NET OnLine, “O*NET OnLine Help.”

Travel services lead tourism occupations in SES

Based on a 2021 Conference Board of Canada report,¹¹ tourism and hospitality occupations can be categorized into six key groups. Of these groups, on average, travel service occupations have the highest SES scores:

1. travel services (48)
2. air transportation (45)
3. recreation and entertainment (43)
4. accommodation (40)
5. food and beverage service (39)
6. all other transportation (39)

Out of these six groups, occupations with the highest total SES scores across all nine skills include:

- recreation, sports, and fitness program and service directors (58);
- retail and wholesale trade managers (57);
- advertising, marketing, and public relations managers (55);
- accommodation service managers (55);
- conference and event planners and managers in transportation (53).

Most of these occupations fall within the travel services and recreation and entertainment occupation groups, indicating that occupations within these groupings have clear SES strengths.

¹¹ Hindle, Rao, and Gabler, *Space to Grow*.

Active listening is the standout skill

There are five strengths within T&H occupations: active listening, speaking, coordination, social perceptiveness, and service orientation. (See Exhibit 1.) Among them, active listening emerged with the highest score (47), with most occupations scoring higher than the average for all occupations. The T&H occupations with standout active listening scores include the following:

- travel counsellors (57);
- retail and wholesale trade managers (57);
- conference and event planners (57);
- advertising, marketing, and public relations managers (59);
- professional occupations in advertising, marketing, and public relations (57);
- recreation, sports, and fitness program and service directors (61);
- accommodation service managers (57).

Based on this list, we can see that front-line roles in T&H such as accommodation service managers have high active listening scores, indicating the significance of customer service skills in these occupations.



Overall, persuasion, complex problem-solving, instructing, and negotiation skills show lower average scores across T&H occupations. There is wide variation in the requirements for each of these skills across these occupations. However, all four are more commonly needed in people manager jobs than in non-managerial jobs, likely because of the challenging situations that they routinely encounter with customers and staff.

Exhibit 1

Social and emotional skills in tourism and hospitality occupations



Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

People managers consistently need higher SES

SES requirements in T&H occupations are significantly higher in people manager roles. (See Appendix B for a list of people manager jobs.) People manager occupations have average scores that are consistently higher than non-managerial occupations for each of the top SES (i.e., active listening, speaking, coordination, social perceptiveness, and service orientation skills). People managers in T&H also have a much narrower range of scores in each top SES compared to non-managerial occupations, suggesting a consistently higher need for these skills.

People managers in T&H generally need to communicate effectively with both staff and customers. They need to understand what others are saying, respond appropriately, and effectively communicate that response to others (active listening and speaking skills). They must also be aware of and understand others' reactions and adjust their actions appropriately (social perceptiveness and coordination skills). Finally, they need to actively find ways to help both customers and staff in response to requests (service orientation).¹²

SES requirements are also higher among people managers in other sectors, likely because of the complexity of managing staff. Given the similarity, T&H workers who are in this occupation group are better positioned to seize re-employment opportunities within the sector or similar positions in other sectors.

12 O*NET Resource Center, "The O*NET Content Model."

At-risk occupations will need significant retraining

Despite many uncertainties about the future of work, we know that some occupations are more exposed to automation risk than others. For example, nearly 20 per cent of Canadian employees are in occupations threatened by automation and would need significant retraining to change jobs.¹³ These include occupations that have low education requirements, are largely independent, and involve repetitive tasks. The food service industry is one of the top five at risk.

High-risk, low mobility (HRLM) occupations within T&H include:¹⁴

- food counter attendants, kitchen helpers, and related support occupations;
- cashiers;
- cooks;
- hotel front desk clerks;
- other customer and information service representatives (including light duty cleaners; janitors, caretakers, and building superintendents).

These at-risk occupations have noticeable SES strengths, with hotel front desk clerks having some of the highest SES scores (average of 44) among the HRLM jobs. Despite the risk of automation facing hotel front desk clerks, the strong SES scores in almost all categories provide higher mobility. For example, as hotel front desk clerks have similar SES profiles to both travel counsellors and tour and travel guides, a transition to these occupations within the T&H industry is feasible with upskilling in active listening and speaking.

Light duty cleaners (31) and janitors, caretakers, and building superintendents (28) have the lowest average SES scores. These, and other low-scoring occupations such as food counter attendants, kitchen helpers, and other customer and information service representatives, will require significant SES retraining. However, the SES strengths for each of these occupations may support transitions to jobs of lower automation risk and higher mobility. Additionally, a higher risk of automation is not associated with lower overall employment, as upskilling initiatives allow for employment growth and increased job transferability.¹⁵



¹³ Gresch, *Responding to Automation*.

¹⁴ Hindle, Rao, and Gabler, *Space to Grow*.

¹⁵ OECD, *What Happened to Jobs at High Risk of Automation?*

Occupations with fewer options will need a clear path

T&H occupations with the fewest options for career transitions¹⁶ also have the overall lowest SES scores. (See Table 1.) As this group has few potential transition options and lower SES scores, supports should be heavily targeted, including substantial investments in training, to help workers find gainful employment. To understand where workers in each occupation require upskilling, programs should address both the former and the target roles' strengths and weaknesses. (See Exhibit 2.)

Options for work among these occupations are more likely to be outside the sector (85 per cent more likely), as employment growth prospects for the T&H sector are generally weak given the negative impacts of COVID-19.¹⁷ As such, training programs should consider a multi-faceted approach to equip workers with SES and technical skills for jobs outside the sector.

Table 1
SES scores for the least transferable T&H occupations

	Active listening	Speaking	Coordination	Social perceptiveness	Complex problem-solving	Service orientation	Instructing	Persuasion	Negotiation
Cleaning supervisors	43	50	50	50	37	45	43	41	45
Bus drivers, subway operators, and other transport operators	41	32	40	41	29	39	20	34	28
Railway car servicers, aircraft mechanics, and aircraft inspectors	47	46	42	41	50	40	42	39	35
Automotive service technicians, truck and bus mechanics, and mechanical repairers	44	42	40	36	44	40	40	36	32

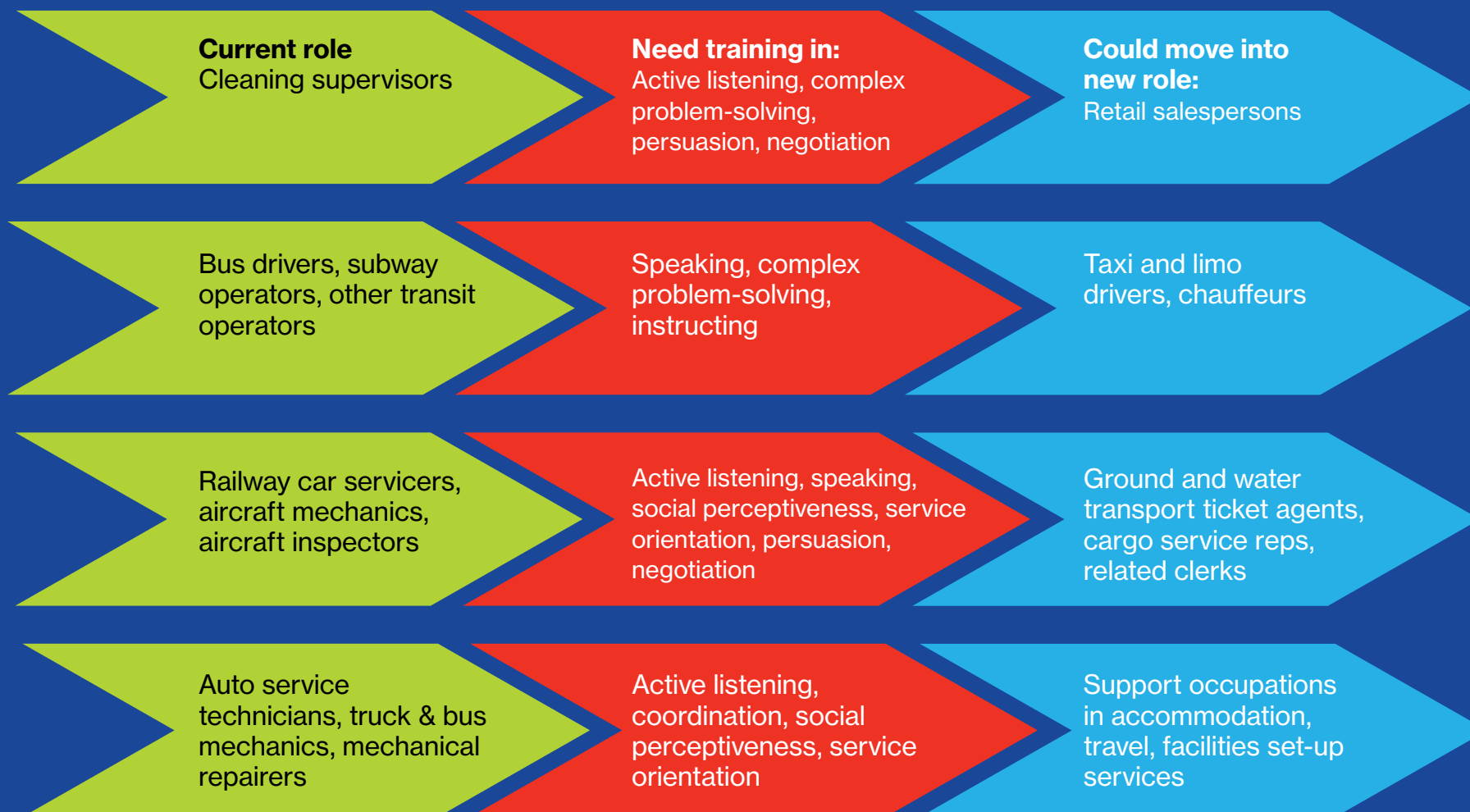
Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

¹⁶ Hindle, Rao, and Gabler, *Space to Grow*.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Exhibit 2

Opportunities for training



Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

Next steps and areas for further work

Some workers in the T&H sector have notable SES strengths. For example, those in travel service-related occupations and people managerial roles generally have higher SES. On the other hand, some T&H roles such as many food and beverage services and other transportation occupations have lower average SES scores. Perhaps of most concern are the four roles with few potential career transitions and limited social and emotional skills.

Below are next steps that could help the T&H sector minimize the gaps in SES to support job transitions within the sector:

1. Develop and provide specific development paths for those in non-managerial occupations. As a result of COVID-19, the T&H sector was required to “pivot toward new offerings that make sense for customers and their business.”¹⁸ Upskilling and reskilling workers who are looking to move up to people manager jobs would benefit the sector. Programs should focus on the five SES that are needed most in people manager jobs to provide service outward (i.e., customers) and inward (i.e., staff): active listening, speaking, coordination, social perceptiveness, and service orientation skills.
2. Provide SES retraining for those in HRLM occupations or with few job transition options. (See roles in Table 1.) Workers can leverage their skills strengths (active listening, speaking, coordination, and social perceptiveness), which may support transitions to jobs of lower automation risk and higher mobility. Out of the T&H occupations, the most transition options are within the technical, professional, and leadership areas.

For example, those in people manager positions such as advertising, marketing, and public relations managers and accommodation service managers each have five transition options. Upskilling programs should focus on teaching specialized skills and how to use specialized equipment, tools, and technologies as they align with industry trends to ensure job transferability and avoid the risk of becoming outdated.¹⁹

3. Deliver training and development by type of SES. To identify who should be receiving training in which type of SES, initial assessments of workers’ actual levels of SES need to be done. These would serve as baseline data on workers in the target groups.
4. Use appropriate SES assessment tools. Means of assessment must be suitable for the services sector or able to be tailored to workers in T&H occupations.



18 Deloitte, *The Future of Hospitality*.

19 Hindle, Rao, and Gabler, *Space to Grow*.

SES are receiving considerable attention from employers, who acknowledge their importance to the skill set required for employment within the T&H Industry. The Learning Nation report²⁰ forecasts that their importance and demand across all sectors will eventually outstrip that for STEM skills in the years ahead. This represents an opportunity for T&H to reposition itself as a key learning ground for these important, marketable skills post-pandemic. However, unlike so-called hard skills—for which competency-based frameworks and diagnostics are readily available—SES definitions, constructs, and proficiency scales are still in development in Canada, with numerous research and development initiatives under way across multiple networks and sectors.

Further research is required to better understand the SES assessment and training landscape as it currently exists and how it will evolve over the coming years through the further definition and validation of SES frameworks, diagnostics, and use cases in the workplace, employment, and academic contexts. The Conference Board of Canada and partners like OTEC are committed to this work.

The Conference Board of Canada will continue to address the topic of SES in an upcoming report that identifies appropriate SES assessment frameworks and evidence-based approaches to assessment and makes recommendations that can support SES credentialing or profiles.

20 Employment and Social Development Canada, “Canada—A Learning Nation”.



Appendix A

Tourism and hospitality occupations by subsector

This appendix lists the occupations and their groupings used to analyze social and emotional skills in the tourism and hospitality sector. Using a concordance table developed by Statistics Canada, we mapped O*NET data to Canadian National Occupation Classification (NOC) codes to identify opportunities for workers to transition to a more stable career.

To access this appendix, download it here:



Appendix B

Methods summary

Background

As a response to pandemic disruption to the tourism and hospitality (T&H) sector, 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.”¹ 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 individuals and the industry can better position these skills, and their development, as a unique competitive advantage in the Canadian economy.

Our work on SES aims to help tourism and hospitality workers transition 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, evidence-based approaches to assessment, and platforms that can support SES credentialing or profiles.

¹ OTEC, “We’re Here for You.” This project is now the Tourism Hospitality Emergency Recovery (THER) project.

This briefing focuses on identifying SES gaps and strengths across occupations.

Data were gathered using existing internal research, secondary research on skills gaps specific to tourism and hospitality, and skills data. Key areas of focus for the analysis include the following.

Mapping the O*NET framework to 48 T&H occupations

O*NET is a database of occupations and their skills developed by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. The O*Net framework provides a rigorous set of job-related variables that outlines work and worker characteristics for approximately 10,000 American occupations.

We mapped the O*NET framework to Canadian National Occupation Classification (NOC) codes using a concordance table developed by Statistics Canada,² creating a new set of codes to identify Canadian occupations and identifying “potential transitions for Canadian workers seeking new career opportunities that are both viable and desirable.”³ You can read more in our primer, *Modelling Job Transitions in Canada*.

This briefing relies on Modelling Job Transitions (MJT) codes and a combination of NOC codes developed by The Conference Board of Canada for the 48 T&H occupations. Combining the NOC codes on some of the occupations allows for clearer representation of occupational groupings. A comparison of T&H occupations (48) and all other

occupations (402) indicates that average differences in SES are small. As such, a comparison of SES in the T&H industry and non-T&H occupations does not yield significant findings.

T&H subsector groupings

The 48 T&H occupations were grouped into six subsectors based on Conference Board of Canada 2021⁴ data. SES were comparatively analyzed across occupations to examine total average SES score per occupation and average score per SES. From this, we gathered data on which positions have the highest and lowest SES scores and how scores for each occupation grouping compare across the T&H sector. We then matched SES profile similarities across 48 T&H occupations to group occupations that may support a job transition, occupations with standout SES strengths, and upskilling options based on occupational skills strengths.

People manager occupations

People managers are those in the T&H industry in a managerial or supervisory role. (See Table 1.)

² Statistics Canada, “Correspondence: National Occupational Classification.”

³ Rao, Hindle, and Gabler, *Modelling Job Transitions in Canada*.

⁴ Hindle, Rao, and Gabler, *Space to Grow*.

Table 1
People manager occupations

MJT code	Occupation
0124	Advertising, marketing, and public relations managers
0513	Recreation, sports, and fitness program and service directors
0621	Retail and wholesale trade managers
0631	Restaurant and food service managers
0632	Accommodation service managers
0731	Managers in transportation
5254	Program leaders and instructors in recreation, sport, and fitness
6211	Retail sales supervisors
6311	Food service supervisors
6313	Accommodation, travel, tourism, and related services supervisors
6315	Cleaning supervisors

Source: The Conference Board of Canada.

Nine SES descriptions

We define SES as nine specific skills from the O*NET framework.
(See Table 2.)

Table 2
SES description

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.
	Managers in transportation
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.



Appendix C

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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.

The briefing was reviewed internally by Elaine Lam, Chief of Research, Education and Inclusion, The Conference Board of Canada; and Michael Burt, Vice President, The Conference Board of Canada. External review was provided by Philip Mondor, President and CEO of Tourism HR Canada, and an anonymous reviewer. We would also like to acknowledge the Economics Research Team for their work with O*Net data, which contributed to this briefing.

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