



Ontario Chamber of Commerce

Skills Bridge Beta Program Evaluation

Capacity Building for Canadian Small and
Medium-Sized Enterprises



Based in TMU's Ted Rogers School of Management, the Diversity Institute (DI) has a research staff of over 50 in 10 regional hubs across Canada and works with more than 200 partners and a global network of experts. The Diversity Institute leads research on skills and employment trends, technology adoption, inclusive ecosystems (with a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurship), as well as related innovation pilot design and evaluation. Our action oriented, evidence-based approach is advancing knowledge of the complex barriers faced by Indigenous people and equity-deserving groups, informing policies and practices to effect change, and producing concrete results.

DI is the research lead for the Future Skills Centre (FSC) a consortium including Toronto Metropolitan University, Signal49 Research, and Blueprint. DI leads research on responsible AI adoption in Canada and internationally to inform policies, strategies, and programs. As part of its commitment to advancing inclusive innovation and entrepreneurship, DI founded the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (WEKH) and the Inclusive Innovation and Entrepreneurship Network (IINet) and offers a range of training programs and advisory services.



The Future Skills Centre is powered by a Canada-wide network of **5,000+ partners** committed to solving Canada's most pressing labour market challenges. More than just a funder, we are an active partner in every project we support. We ask more of our partners — prioritizing collaboration, shared learning and openness — to foster long-term relationships and enable the ambitious approaches needed to drive real change.

The Future Skills Centre operates as a consortium of Toronto Metropolitan University (including Diversity Institute and Magnet), Signal49 Research, and Blueprint. We are funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.



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Executive Summary

Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a critical role in Canada's economy but face increasing pressure to adapt to rapid technological, economic, and labour market change. As skill requirements evolve, the need for ongoing workforce development has become more urgent, particularly in areas related to digital transformation, innovation, and business adaptability. While SMEs widely recognize the importance of upskilling, they continue to face persistent challenges related to productivity, talent shortages, and the ability to attract and retain skilled workers. This creates a growing gap between the skills needed to remain competitive and the capacity of SMEs to develop those skills internally. A range of interconnected barriers contributes to this gap. Many SMEs lack the time, resources, and internal structures needed to plan and deliver formal training, resulting in approaches that are often informal, reactive, and difficult to sustain. Short-term business pressures frequently take priority over longer-term investments in workforce development, while uncertainty around the value and return on training can further limit action. At the same time, access to training is uneven, influenced by factors such as digital readiness, organizational capacity, and broader labour market inequalities. Together, these challenges highlight the need for more accessible, practical and integrated training solutions that align with the realities of SMEs and support sustained engagement in skills development.

Skills Bridge Beta program design

Skills Bridge was developed as a national training and business support initiative to address the workforce development needs of Canadian SMEs. Funded by the Future Skills Centre (FSC) and delivered through a partnership between the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC), the Diversity Institute (DI), and Magnet, the program introduced a centralized digital learning platform designed as a one-stop shop for skills training. This report evaluates the full Skills Bridge Beta phase covering the period from June 1, 2023, through January 31, 2026, including the initial implementation and the subsequent extension period.

The program was guided by four core objectives: strengthening SME adaptability and competencies, supporting more inclusive workplaces, creating pathways to employment through upskilling and developing a sustainable marketplace of training resources. During the extension period, the program expanded its reach, increased participation targets and broadened training content to support scalability and long-term sustainability.

After initial iterative testing phases, the Beta phase tested and refined this model through an iterative approach, incorporating feedback from SMEs and partners to improve platform functionality, user experience and content. A key innovation was the transition to a unified learning management system (LMS), enabling single sign-on access to courses, tools and resources and reducing fragmentation across training providers. The platform was further strengthened through the development of the Marketplace of Learning, improving course discovery and establishing a foundation for future partnerships and sustainability. Overall, the program was designed to improve the skills and capacity

of SMEs in the short term, reduce skills gaps and support more inclusive practices over time, and strengthen SMEs' ability to attract and retain talent.

Skills Bridge Beta program delivery

The Skills Bridge Beta phase focused on implementing and refining training delivery, platform functionality, recruitment, and participant support. Building on earlier testing phases, the program introduced a centralized learning experience through the Magnet platform, supported by a customized Docebo LMS. This shift improved usability, streamlined access, and created a more cohesive training environment for SMEs and their employees.

Training delivery evolved significantly during the Beta phase. The course catalogue expanded to include both foundational and more advanced content across areas such as artificial intelligence (AI), governance, business operations, and equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI). Content was delivered through short, modular formats and organized into structured learning pathways, allowing SMEs to engage with training in a flexible and practical way. The introduction of the Marketplace of Learning further improved course discovery and access, while webinars complemented asynchronous learning by providing additional, topic-specific engagement opportunities.

Program delivery was supported by a network of partners, including chambers of commerce, which played a central role in recruitment and engagement. Recruitment approaches evolved from highly coordinated, manual onboarding processes to a more streamlined model combining self-registration with targeted, relationship-based support. This dual approach improved efficiency while maintaining the personalized engagement needed to sustain participation. Ongoing communication, reminders and support mechanisms were used to encourage course completion and continued engagement.

Overall, the Beta phase established a more scalable and user-friendly delivery model by integrating platform functionality, expanding training content, and refining recruitment and onboarding processes. These improvements enabled broader participation while highlighting the importance of balancing streamlined access with ongoing support to effectively engage SMEs in training.

Skills Bridge Beta program evaluation

This evaluation examines the effectiveness of the Skills Bridge program in addressing the training and business support needs of Canadian SMEs across the full Beta phase, including the initial implementation and the subsequent extension period. It assesses how changes introduced during the Beta influenced program outcomes and evaluates the extent to which the model represents a scalable approach to delivering skills development and training.

The evaluation employed a longitudinal mixed-methods design, collecting data at multiple points throughout the Beta phase. Data collection combined quantitative and qualitative approaches, including surveys, interviews, and roundtable discussions, to capture measurable outcomes and participant experiences across SMEs, learners, and chambers of commerce.

The evaluation was guided by five key questions:

1. To what extent has the program effectively recruited and engaged SMEs through chambers of commerce across the country?
2. To what extent does the LMS content affect the skills development of engaged SMEs?
3. How does the training align with the evolving skills needs of SMEs?
4. To what extent does EDI training contribute to improvements in diversity and inclusion within SMEs?
5. What challenges or barriers affect access to and use of the LMS?

Survey instruments were deployed at multiple stages, including registration, post-course, post-webinar, and exit surveys, allowing for baseline and end-of-program comparisons. These were complemented by qualitative data collected through roundtables and interviews conducted at different stages of the Beta phase. Together, these methods provided a comprehensive and triangulated approach to assessing program design, delivery, and outcomes across the full implementation period.

Findings

To what extent has the OCC LMS project effectively recruited and engaged SMEs through chambers of commerce across the country?

The Skills Bridge LMS project demonstrated strong national reach and effective engagement of SMEs through chambers of commerce, successfully attracting a diverse cross-section of learners and businesses. Learner participation spanned a wide range of age groups, with the largest segments in mid-career stages, and reflected a high level of educational attainment while remaining accessible to individuals with varied academic backgrounds. The program also achieved meaningful engagement with equity-deserving groups, with women, racialized individuals, Indigenous participants, Francophones, and persons with disabilities represented at notable levels. This indicates that the platform was broadly accessible and aligned with its objective of supporting inclusive participation in workforce development.

Participation patterns were geographically concentrated, primarily in Ontario, with additional representation from British Columbia and Alberta. These trends reflect the distribution of chamber networks and program partnerships rather than limitations in reach. SME participants represented a wide range of sectors, with strong participation from professional services, health care, manufacturing, and education, demonstrating the relevance of the platform across diverse business contexts. Most participating SMEs were small businesses, consistent with the program's intended target group, and ownership demographics showed meaningful representation of women- and racialized-owned businesses, although representation among Indigenous-owned businesses and persons with disabilities remained comparatively lower.

Chambers of commerce played a central role as trusted intermediaries in facilitating recruitment and engagement. Their established relationships with local business communities enabled effective outreach and participation, particularly when combined with direct, personalized engagement strategies. However, variation in chamber capacity contributed to uneven awareness and uptake across regions, indicating that recruitment outcomes were influenced not only by program design but also by the strength and activity of local delivery partners. Overall, the findings suggest that the Skills

Bridge model effectively leveraged chamber networks to recruit and engage SMEs at scale, while highlighting opportunities to strengthen consistency in outreach and participation across regions.

To what extent does the LMS content affect the skills development of engaged SMEs?

The Skills Bridge LMS demonstrated a meaningful impact on the skills development of participating SMEs by providing accessible, relevant, and practical training aligned with workforce and organizational needs. Evidence from learner surveys, participation data, and qualitative feedback indicates that the platform supported professional growth, strengthened workplace competencies, and contributed to broader business capacity. Learners primarily engaged with the platform to enhance their professional capabilities and support career advancement, with professional development emerging as the leading motivation, followed by role requirements, personal interest and manager recommendations. This pattern suggests that the LMS was perceived not only as a learning resource but as a strategic tool for workforce development, particularly where training could be directly applied to day-to-day business activities.

Participation trends further indicate strong alignment between LMS content and SME skill needs. The most completed courses and well-attended webinars focused on leadership, governance, communication, AI, cybersecurity, financial management and human resources, alongside topics related to EDI and workplace inclusion. This distribution reflects demand for both foundational business competencies and emerging skill areas linked to technological and organizational change. Survey data also show measurable improvements in learners' self-reported skills across a wide range of competencies, with the most notable gains observed in analytical, financial, and innovation-related skills. At the same time, small declines in a limited number of communication-related skills likely reflect increased self-awareness following training rather than actual decreases in ability. While these findings provide useful directional insight, it is important to note that self-reported measures are based on participant perception and may be influenced by changes in confidence or benchmarking over time.

Qualitative findings reinforce these patterns and provide important context for understanding variation in outcomes. Participants consistently reported that the impact of training depended on its direct applicability to their business context, particularly given the time constraints faced by SMEs. Content that was perceived as practical, case-based, and immediately relevant to current challenges had the greatest impact, while more general or less tailored material was seen as less actionable. Participants emphasized the importance of applied examples, clear implementation guidance, and industry-specific relevance in translating learning into practice. Overall, the findings indicate that Skills Bridge contributed positively to skills development and supported continuous learning, while highlighting that the effectiveness of training is closely tied to its relevance, specificity, and ease of application within SME environments.

How does this compare to the skills needs of SMEs?

The Skills Bridge LMS demonstrates strong alignment with the evolving skills needs of SMEs by delivering practical, relevant, and flexible training that reflects real-world business demands. High levels of satisfaction and perceived quality across both courses and webinars indicate that content is well received, with most learners rating materials as compelling, useful, and relevant to their roles.

SMEs similarly reported moderate to high satisfaction with course offerings, reinforcing that the platform effectively meets organizational expectations. Engagement patterns further suggest that SMEs are using the platform strategically, primarily to build workforce capabilities, improve organizational performance, and support business growth, while also fostering continuous learning and strengthening company culture.

Participation data highlight clear alignment between LMS content and priority skill areas for SMEs. Courses and webinars related to leadership, governance, communication, AI, financial management, and human resources attracted the highest levels of engagement, alongside strong interest in EDI and workplace inclusion topics. This distribution reflects both foundational business needs and emerging areas tied to technological and organizational change. The modular and stackable design of learning pathways supported flexible engagement, allowing SMEs to integrate training into time-constrained environments while progressing through increasingly advanced content. Growing demand for more specialized and advanced material further underscores the importance of iterative content development and progressive learning structures.

Evidence also indicates that training translates into workplace application, with a substantial proportion of SMEs reporting that employees have already applied course learnings, and many others expecting future application. This demonstrates both immediate and anticipated returns on training investments, highlighting the practical value of the platform. At the same time, some participants reported challenges in applying content, particularly where material was perceived as too general or lacking depth for specific business contexts. Qualitative findings reinforce this, with SMEs expressing a need for more targeted, sector-specific and advanced content, as well as clearer guidance on implementation. Overall, the findings suggest that Skills Bridge effectively aligns with SME needs by supporting practical skill development and organizational growth, while also identifying opportunities to deepen relevance through more tailored and advanced learning pathways.

To what extent does EDI training contribute to the improvement of diversity at SMEs?

EDI training within Skills Bridge was generally well received and contributed to increased awareness and understanding of equity, diversity, and inclusion concepts among participants. The majority of learners reported improved understanding, and many indicated that EDI concepts had become more important to them following participation. Modest gains were observed in self-reported EDI-related skills, particularly in areas related to understanding broader social, economic, political, and cultural contexts. These findings suggest that the program was effective in strengthening foundational awareness and reinforcing the relevance of EDI within workplace settings.

However, comparison of baseline and exit survey data indicates that changes in organizational EDI practices were limited over the duration of the program. Key indicators such as the presence of EDI strategies, mandatory training, and HR structures remained largely stable, with only minor variation. This suggests that many SMEs entered the program with existing EDI practices already in place, and that short-term participation in training alone may be insufficient to drive measurable structural change at the organizational level. While awareness and perceived importance increased for some participants, these shifts did not consistently translate into formal changes in policies or practices during the evaluation period.

Qualitative findings provide further context for these patterns. Participants recognized the importance of EDI content, particularly in supporting inclusive workplace practices, but engagement with standalone EDI training was mixed and often depended on its perceived relevance to immediate business needs. Many participants indicated that EDI content was more effective when integrated into broader business topics, rather than delivered as separate modules. There was also a clear demand for more practical, applied guidance to support the translation of EDI principles into workplace actions. Overall, the findings suggest that Skills Bridge contributed to increased awareness and interest in EDI, while highlighting the need for more integrated, applied, and context-specific approaches to support organizational-level change.

What are the challenges or barriers to the access and use of the LMS?

Findings reveal a clear pattern of attrition across the participation funnel, with strong initial interest not translating into sustained engagement or course completion. While large numbers of SMEs registered and enrolled in training, substantially fewer progressed to completing multiple courses, indicating a persistent gap between access and follow-through. Engagement was generally shallow rather than sustained, with most SMEs completing only one or two courses and participation declining steadily at higher levels of involvement. These patterns were consistent across regions and firm sizes, suggesting that attrition reflects broader structural constraints rather than localized issues. Although smaller SMEs were more likely to access training, they faced similar challenges in sustaining engagement, while mid-sized firms demonstrated somewhat higher completion rates, pointing to the role of organizational capacity in supporting continued participation.

Time constraints emerged as the primary barrier to engagement, particularly for SME owners and employees managing competing responsibilities. Participants consistently reported difficulty allocating time to complete training, even when content was perceived as valuable and relevant. Workload pressures and shifting business priorities further limited sustained participation, contributing to the observed drop-off between enrolment and completion. These findings highlight that the key barriers to engagement were not primarily technological, but structural, rooted in the operational realities of SMEs.

Platform-related factors also influenced participation, though to a lesser extent. While most users found the interface accessible and user-friendly, some participants reported challenges related to navigation, course selection, and assigning training to employees. The breadth of available content, while seen as a strength, was also described as overwhelming without clear guidance on where to begin or how to prioritize learning. Feedback pointed to the need for more structured pathways, clearer course-level indicators, and improved visibility of key features such as learning plans. These usability and guidance gaps, combined with limited organizational capacity, reduced the effectiveness of self-directed engagement.

Organizational constraints further shaped SMEs' ability to support employee participation in training. The most significant challenges included competing workplace priorities, limited time to support staff learning, and difficulties integrating training into daily operations. While some SMEs implemented supportive practices such as flexible scheduling and reminders, a notable proportion reported taking no specific actions to facilitate completion. Participants emphasized the importance of structured guidance, practical implementation support, and mechanisms to motivate engagement, such as

certifications or digital credentials. Overall, the findings indicate that barriers to participation were driven primarily by time, capacity, and competing priorities, with platform design and organizational supports playing a secondary but still meaningful role in shaping engagement outcomes.

Conclusions

The Beta phase of Skills Bridge represents a significant shift from a fragmented training model toward a unified, centralized learning platform tailored to the needs of SMEs. In doing so, it addressed a core gap in the skills ecosystem by improving access to relevant, structured, and affordable training for businesses with limited internal capacity. The program demonstrated strong uptake and engagement, exceeding participation targets and reaching a diverse cross-section of SMEs and learners. High levels of satisfaction with course quality, relevance, and format, alongside improvements in self-reported skills, indicate that the platform is effective in delivering training that is valued and applicable in workplace contexts.

At the same time, the findings highlight a consistent gap between initial access and sustained engagement. While SMEs demonstrated strong interest in training, participation was often limited to a small number of courses, reflecting broader constraints related to time, competing priorities, and organizational capacity. Engagement was most effective when supported by active facilitation, including outreach, reminders, and direct support from chambers of commerce and program staff, reinforcing the importance of trusted intermediaries in driving participation.

From a strategic perspective, this evaluation also answers two questions. First, what approaches or tools are best suited to helping SME employers assess and recognize skills in the labour market, and under what conditions can their use either reduce or even eliminate skills mismatches? The platform's design successfully reduced barriers to entry through a unified system, modular course structure, and streamlined access. However, SMEs experienced challenges navigating the breadth of available content and identifying clear pathways aligned with their needs. While content was broadly well-aligned with SME skill demands, particularly at the foundational level, there was clear and growing demand for more advanced, sector-specific, and implementation-focused training. Similarly, EDI training contributed to increased awareness and understanding, but evidence of short-term organizational change was limited, suggesting that knowledge alone is insufficient to drive shifts in workplace practices.

Another strategic question answered was: Under what conditions do digital platforms for training, recruitment, and skills assessment and recognition lower SME cost and time barriers to investing in training and development? The Beta phase confirms the value and feasibility of a centralized training platform for SMEs, while underscoring that the primary barrier to impact is not awareness of skills gaps, but the structural conditions that limit sustained investment in training. Addressing these constraints will be critical to strengthening long-term engagement and maximizing the effectiveness of the model.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen approaches that support sustained participation beyond initial enrolment by addressing time constraints and helping SMEs better integrate training into day-to-day operations.
2. Expand advanced, sector-specific, and implementation-focused content, including practical tools, case-based learning, and guidance that supports real-world application.
3. Improve platform guidance through clearer learning pathways, recommended course sequences, and features that help SMEs quickly identify relevant training based on their business needs.
4. Maintain high-touch engagement strategies, including targeted outreach, follow-ups, and ongoing support through chambers and program staff to reinforce participation over time.
5. Tailor delivery and engagement strategies to reflect differences in SME size, sector, and capacity, ensuring that supports are responsive to varying organizational contexts.
6. Integrate EDI content into broader business training areas such as leadership, HR, and operations, supported by practical examples that facilitate application in workplace settings.
7. Continue refining the platform to reduce barriers to use, improve navigation and usability, and strengthen the overall value proposition for SMEs investing in training.
8. Conduct further evaluation to better understand the barriers and enablers that drive SME adoption and sustained engagement with Skills Bridge, refine the model and strengthen long-term uptake.

Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a foundational role in Canada's economic landscape, representing 99.7% of employer businesses and employing 63.8% of the private-sector workforce which makes up about 7.8 million people.¹ Despite their central importance, SMEs face mounting pressures to adapt to rapid technological change. The World Economic Forum estimates that 39% of workers' core skills will need to change within the next five years due to advances in artificial intelligence (AI), automation and digital transformation.² However, organizational responses often lag behind the pace of technological change, contributing to persistent skills mismatches, particularly among smaller firms with limited resources for workforce planning.³ These challenges are compounded by lower productivity levels relative to larger firms. In Canada, small firms generate significantly less output per hour worked, achieving only about 63% of the productivity levels observed in large firms. More broadly, compared to the United States, Canada's business-sector labour productivity declined from 83% of U.S. levels in 2002 to 73% of U.S. levels in 2019, with firm size differences accounting for a substantial share of this gap.⁴

The need for workforce development is further intensified by persistent labour shortages. Statistics Canada reports that many Canadian businesses continue to experience difficulties recruiting and retaining skilled workers across industries.⁵ Similarly, Canadian surveys indicate that a significant proportion of firms identify talent shortages as a major barrier to growth and competitiveness.^{6, 7} Evidence from the Diversity Institute (DI) and the Public Policy Forum confirms that SMEs face ongoing skills gaps and structural constraints in accessing and developing talent.⁸ These pressures occur within a broader context of globalization, technological transformation and demographic change, all of which are reshaping labour market demands and increasing the need for adaptable and highly skilled workforces.⁹

Human capital development is therefore critical to improving firm performance and economic resilience. Differences in workforce skills are closely linked to productivity disparities across firms, with OECD research identifying human capital as a key determinant of productivity and innovation.¹⁰ In this context, investments in workforce training and upskilling represent a vital mechanism through which SMEs can enhance productivity, support technological adoption and strengthen their competitiveness.¹¹ Despite widespread recognition of these benefits, training investment remains uneven and often limited, particularly among SMEs. This gap between the need for skills development and actual investment underscores the importance of identifying effective strategies to support SME participation in workforce training.

Barriers for SMEs in addressing skills gaps

SMEs face a complex set of structural, organizational and access-related barriers that limit investment in workforce training and development. These barriers operate simultaneously rather than in isolation, reinforcing one another and contributing to persistent skills gaps across the Canadian economy.

At the structural level, market incentives can discourage workforce development. When firms compete primarily on low costs rather than productivity and innovation, incentives to invest in skills remain

limited. This dynamic contributes to a self-reinforcing cycle in which low investment in training leads to lower productivity, reducing the perceived returns to further investment.¹² Hiring practices further reinforce these barriers. Employers frequently rely on educational credentials and prior experience as proxies for skills, even when they express support for skills-based hiring. This reliance reduces pressure on firms to train workers internally and perpetuates gaps between labour market needs and workforce capabilities.^{13, 14} Workers without formal qualifications are consequently less likely to access structured learning opportunities, while firms are less inclined to develop internal capabilities that could substitute for credentials.¹⁵

Organizational constraints also play a significant role. Many SMEs lack formal human resource departments, structured training plans or dedicated learning budgets, limiting their ability to implement systematic workforce development strategies.^{16, 17} Without these systems, SMEs struggle to assess skills gaps, evaluate returns on training and develop strategic workforce plans, resulting in training that is reactive rather than integrated into long-term organizational planning.^{18, 19} National survey evidence reinforces these findings, indicating that employers face growing demand for digital, technical and interpersonal skills, while fewer than half provide formal internal training to develop these competencies.²⁰

When confronted with labour shortages, SMEs often adopt short-term coping strategies rather than investing in formal training. These responses include raising wages, increasing workloads, adopting automation or recruiting internationally.^{21, 22} Such approaches may address immediate operational pressures but can reinforce long-term skills shortages by diverting resources away from workforce development.²³ These decisions are also shaped by bounded rationality, as small business owners often operate under conditions of limited information, time pressure, and uncertainty, leading them to prioritize investments with immediate returns.^{24, 25} Training, which typically involves delayed and uncertain payoffs, is therefore frequently deprioritized despite its recognized importance.

Workplace culture and organizational norms further influence training participation. In some SMEs, employees avoid requesting professional development opportunities due to perceived resource constraints or expectations that such requests will be denied.^{26, 27} As a result, employer-sponsored learning is often informal, ad hoc, and poorly integrated into organizational planning.^{28, 29} Owner-managers frequently prioritize short-term operational concerns and may view training as a cost rather than an investment, particularly when they fear that trained employees may leave for competitors. Over time, these dynamics erode organizational learning cultures and constrain firms' ability to adapt to changing skill demands.³⁰

Consequently, SMEs rely heavily on informal learning mechanisms such as peer learning, mentoring, and on-the-job training. Survey evidence indicates that 91% of SMEs provide informal training, reflecting the operational realities and limited capacity of smaller firms.³¹ While such learning can support immediate skill development, it often lacks formal recognition and may not provide transferable credentials that support labour mobility.³² Training opportunities are also unevenly distributed across firm size, with employees in larger organizations more likely to receive employer-sponsored training than those in smaller firms.^{33, 34} Despite this, a substantial share of workers still engage in work-related training, though participation and perceived relevance vary considerably and unmet needs remain concentrated among lower-wage and precarious workers.³⁵

Digitalization introduces additional barriers. As training delivery increasingly shifts online, digital infrastructure and digital literacy become critical enablers of workforce development.^{36, 37} However, SMEs often face digital readiness challenges, including limited technological capacity and lower levels of digital proficiency among employees.^{38, 39, 40} Workers lacking reliable broadband access, appropriate devices, or foundational digital skills may face structural exclusion from upskilling opportunities.^{41, 42} These barriers are particularly pronounced in rural and underserved communities and risk creating a two-tier system in which firms with strong digital foundations benefit from expanded learning opportunities while others fall behind.⁴³

Access to training is further constrained by socioeconomic and structural inequalities. Financial precarity, caregiving responsibilities, language barriers, and discrimination can limit participation in training programs, particularly for equity-deserving groups.⁴⁴ Research in Canada identifies these barriers as layered and compounding, operating simultaneously at individual, organizational, and systemic levels.⁴⁵ Evidence from adult skills data also shows that training participation is strongly associated with prior educational attainment, occupational status, and sector, reinforcing existing inequalities in access to learning.^{46, 47} Labour market barriers faced by immigrants, including credential non-recognition and occupational downgrading, can further discourage investment in training by reducing the expected returns to skill development.^{48, 49} Limited language proficiency also constrains access to employment and professional development opportunities, particularly for newcomers and diverse workforces in SMEs.⁵⁰

Despite widespread recognition of the importance of upskilling, SMEs still struggle to translate this awareness into sustained investment in training. In this context, the Skills Bridge Beta program was developed to help SMEs who require skills training resources to overcome multiple barriers in the ecosystem.

Skills Bridge Beta Program Design

Figure 1. Project objectivesⁱ



SME Adaptability and Competency Development

Scale an evidence-based platform designed to develop in-demand competencies with curated and custom designed content tailored to the needs of SMEs.



Inclusive Opportunities

Support 200 SMEs from across Canada with training and tools to develop more inclusive workplaces to attract and retain individuals from equity-deserving groups.



Pathways to Jobs

Promote increased employment through upskilling opportunities within SMEs for 600 individuals, with members of equity-deserving groups representing at least 50% of learners.



Sustainable Marketplace

Develop a sustainable marketplace of skills, talent, and support, building on the Magnet platform with selected partners and industry associations to reduce fragmentation and provide a one-stop marketplace for SMEs.



Beta Extension (April 2025–January 2026)

Expand the scale and functionality of the Skills Bridge platform by reaching an additional 300 SMEs and 600 learners, enhancing and broadening training content (including EDI, AI, and trade-focused webinars and learning pathways), and supporting long-term sustainability and knowledge mobilization through e-commerce integration and the Skills Bridge Summit.

ⁱ The project established participation and training targets through its original funding agreement and subsequent amendments with the Future Skills Centre, which guided the expected scale of SME and learner engagement during the Beta phase.

Skills Bridge was developed to test and deliver an innovative training and business support program to address the needs of Canadian SMEs. The project was funded by the Future Skills Centre (FSC) and delivered through a partnership between the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC), DI and Magnet, who co-developed Skills Bridge LMS, a unified digital platform to create a one-stop shop for skills training. Further details about the project's objectives and design follow.

Beta program design

The Skills Bridge project was developed to identify and validate training content that effectively addresses the skills and workforce development needs of SMEs across Canada. Designed as a centralized digital learning initiative, the program aimed to enhance SME capacity to attract, retain, and develop talent while supporting inclusive economic growth. The Beta phase played a critical role in testing and refining the platform, ensuring that it responded to real-world SME challenges and aligned with evolving labour market demands.

Initially, the design of the Skills Bridge platform was guided by a set of research-informed principles. These included leveraging a centralized digital training system to support upskilling and reskilling, reducing fragmentation within Canada's training ecosystem, and improving access to workforce development resources. The platform sought to address persistent challenges related to employee retention and turnover. In doing so, the project aimed to support SMEs in creating inclusive workplaces capable of attracting and retaining talent from equity-deserving groups. By consolidating training opportunities into a single, accessible hub, Skills Bridge was also designed to help SMEs level the playing field and compete more effectively with larger organizations.

The project followed an iterative development approach, beginning with a series of testing phases that informed a broader launch. These early stages focused on assessing SME training needs and developing the core learning management system (LMS). Feedback from SMEs, chambers of commerce, and ecosystem partners played a central role in refining the platform's design, functionality, and content prior to scaling. The Skills Bridge LMS officially launched in Beta in June 2023, enabling the program team to test the system at scale while refining course offerings, user experience, and platform features based on real-world participation.

Earlier iterations of Skills Bridge involved courses hosted across multiple platforms, often requiring multiple logins and disparate assessment systems.⁵¹ The Beta phase addressed these challenges by creating a unified, user-friendly solution. Built on the Docebo LMS and supported by Magnet's expertise, Skills Bridge introduced a centralized "one-stop shop" that allowed users to access all courses, tools, and resources through a single sign-on through the Magnet platform. This integrated approach streamlined navigation, reduced administrative complexity, and enhanced accessibility for SMEs.

As the platform evolved, the curriculum expanded to include training resources focused on diverse and inclusive hiring practices, digital and AI adoption, and decarbonization strategies. Additional support through FSC's *Scaling for Impact*⁵² initiative enabled the program to broaden participation, increase training content, and assess the scalability and long-term sustainability of the Skills Bridge model.

A key innovation of the Beta phase was the development of the Marketplace of Learning, which integrated Docebo's core functionality into the Magnet Learning Centre. This feature allowed users to search for, enrol in, and access courses within a unified system. Enhancements to the user experience and interface included advanced filters, widgets, and course tagging to improve navigation and discoverability. A tracking and payment system was also introduced, enabling future partnerships with third-party course providers. While participation during the Beta phase was free for users, this infrastructure established a foundation for long-term program sustainability and expansion.

The Skills Bridge logic model (Figure 1) outlines how program inputs, including funding, existing learning platforms, partnerships with Magnet and chambers of commerce, and diversity assessment tools support a range of activities such as scaling the LMS, delivering equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) training, conducting research and evaluations, and engaging SMEs across Canada. These activities generate outputs such as expanded online training content, SME participation, knowledge mobilization initiatives, and research reports.

The logic model further identifies short-, intermediate-, and long-term outcomes. In the short term, Skills Bridge aims to enhance adaptability and competency among SME participants, train thousands of SMEs and employees, and support the development of a sustainable skills marketplace. Intermediate outcomes include reduced skills mismatches, increased diversity in leadership, improved inclusivity in SME employment practices, and higher SME retention. Over the long term, the program seeks to foster inclusive work environments, increase labour market participation among equity-deserving groups, and strengthen SMEs' capacity to attract and retain talent. Collectively, these outcomes contribute to the overarching objective of advancing SMEs' ability to include equity-deserving groups in employment and improving access to diverse talent across Canada.

Figure 2A Skills Bridge logic model (activities & outputs)

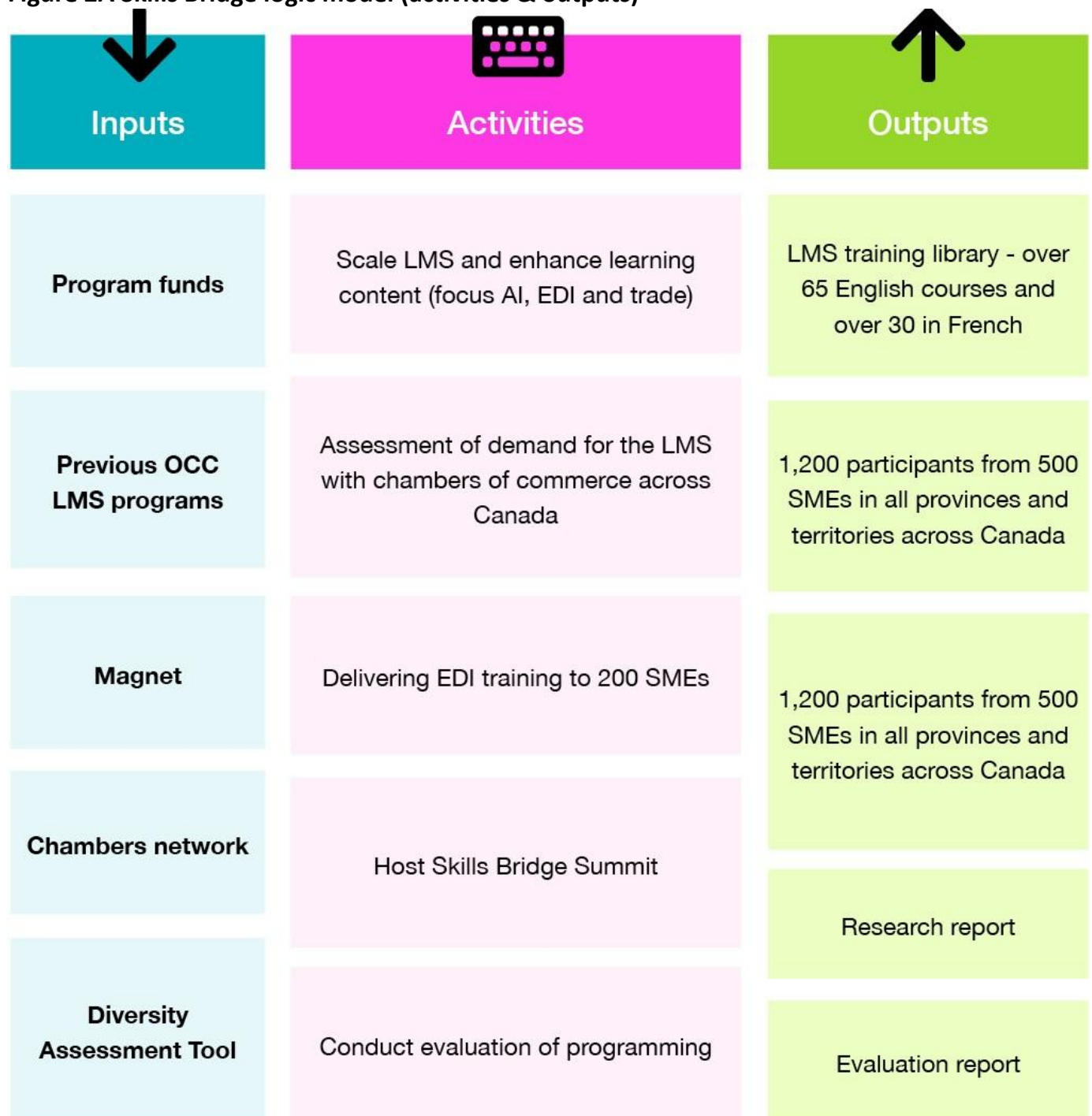
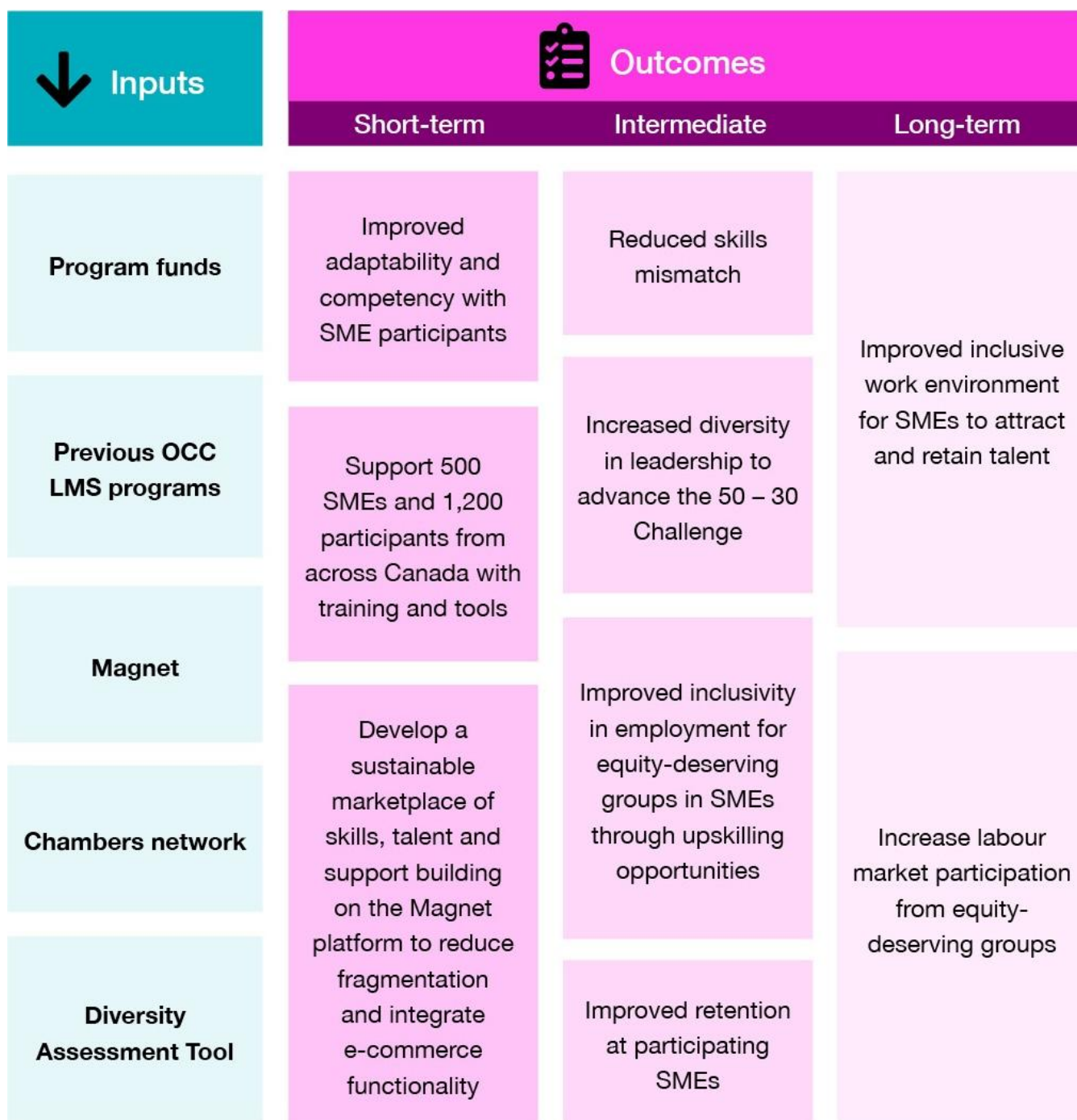


Figure 2B Skills Bridge logic model (outcomes)



Skills Bridge Beta Program Delivery

This section deals with how training, platform functionality, recruitment, and participant support were implemented and experienced in practice. This includes the structure and delivery of courses and learning pathways, the role of project partners, approaches to participant recruitment and onboarding, and the supports provided to SMEs and learners throughout the program.

The learning content and delivery model of Skills Bridge Beta incorporated feedback from earlier testing phases of the project, resulting in refinements to course structure, content design and delivery approach. The launch of the Skills Bridge platform during the Beta phase, delivered through the Magnet platform and supported by a customized Docebo LMS on its backend, enabled improvements in usability, streamlined access to training, and provided a more cohesive learning experience for SMEs and their employees.

Project activities

The course and pathway offerings expanded over time during the Beta period, with some pathways available at launch and others introduced later to broaden coverage and respond to emerging SME needs. Content was also expanded to include more advanced and specialized material, including sequenced courses that built on earlier introductory offerings, as well as new topics in AI, governance, trade, green skills, and EDI.

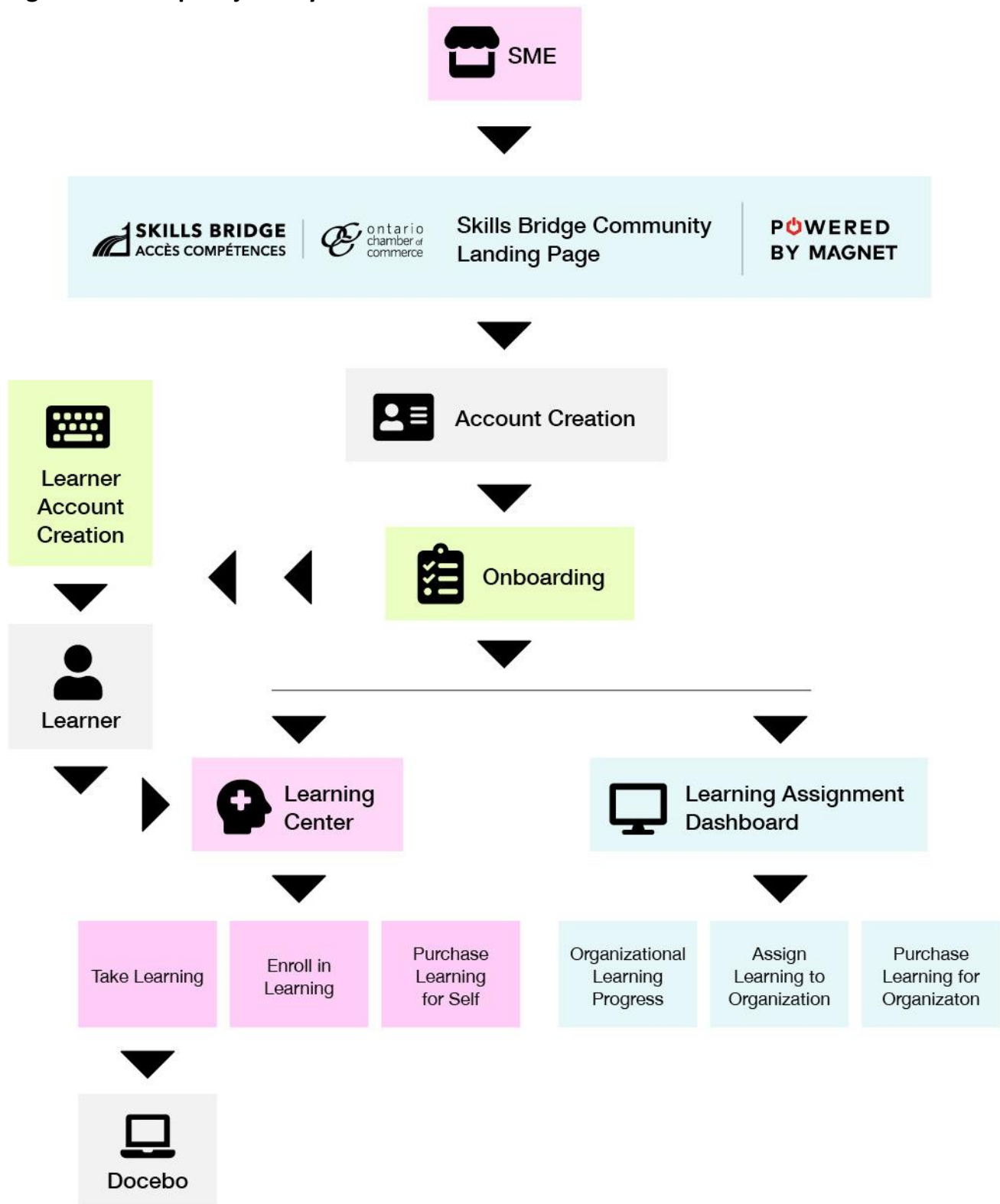
In total, 115 courses were developed and made available on Skills Bridge, including both curated and custom-developed content (Appendix A). Of these, 64 were offered in English and 51 were available in French. An additional five courses in AI, governance, and trade were in development at the time of reporting. Two courses were removed in December 2025 after reaching usage limits set by a third-party provider, demonstrating the program's reliance on and management of external content partnerships.

Subject matter was adjusted over the course of the Beta through the addition of new topic areas, more advanced offerings, and sequenced content designed to build on earlier introductory material. Adjustments included expansion into human resources, mental health, social media and digital skills, sales fundamentals, adaptability, AI, governance, trade, green skills, and EDI, as well as the introduction of higher-level learning opportunities such as advanced customer service. Course development methods evolved during the Beta phase as well. In 2024, a hybrid Request for Proposal/Request for Quotation (RFP/RFQ) process was implemented, combining end-to-end vendor development with a more hands-on model in which OCC and DI managed multiple specialized vendors responsible for different aspects of course production. This approach, in addition to incorporating SMEs' feedback and evaluation insights from previous phases⁵³ into the program design, improved efficiency, reduced costs, and supported the continued expansion of the course catalogue.

Courses were designed in short 15-minute modules that could be stacked into 60–90-minute units, and incorporated reflection points, interactive activities, varied media, and downloadable resources. This modular approach was introduced in response to earlier feedback indicating that one-size-fits-all online learning formats were ineffective for SME contexts. Learning pathways were created to provide structured curricula for specific skillsets, organizing related content into clearer sequences and helping SMEs and learners navigate the platform and progress through complementary topics more systematically.

A total of 20 English-language learning pathways were developed during the Beta period (Appendix B), 18 of which were also available in French. Additional pathways were introduced later to expand coverage and respond to emerging needs, including governance (April 2025), workplace safety (May 2025), trade (May 2026), and Indigenous-focused pathways (May 2026). In addition to asynchronous learning, 15 webinars were delivered to provide synchronous learning opportunities on topics related to EDI, AI, and trade (Appendix C).

Figure 3. Participant journey



Partnerships

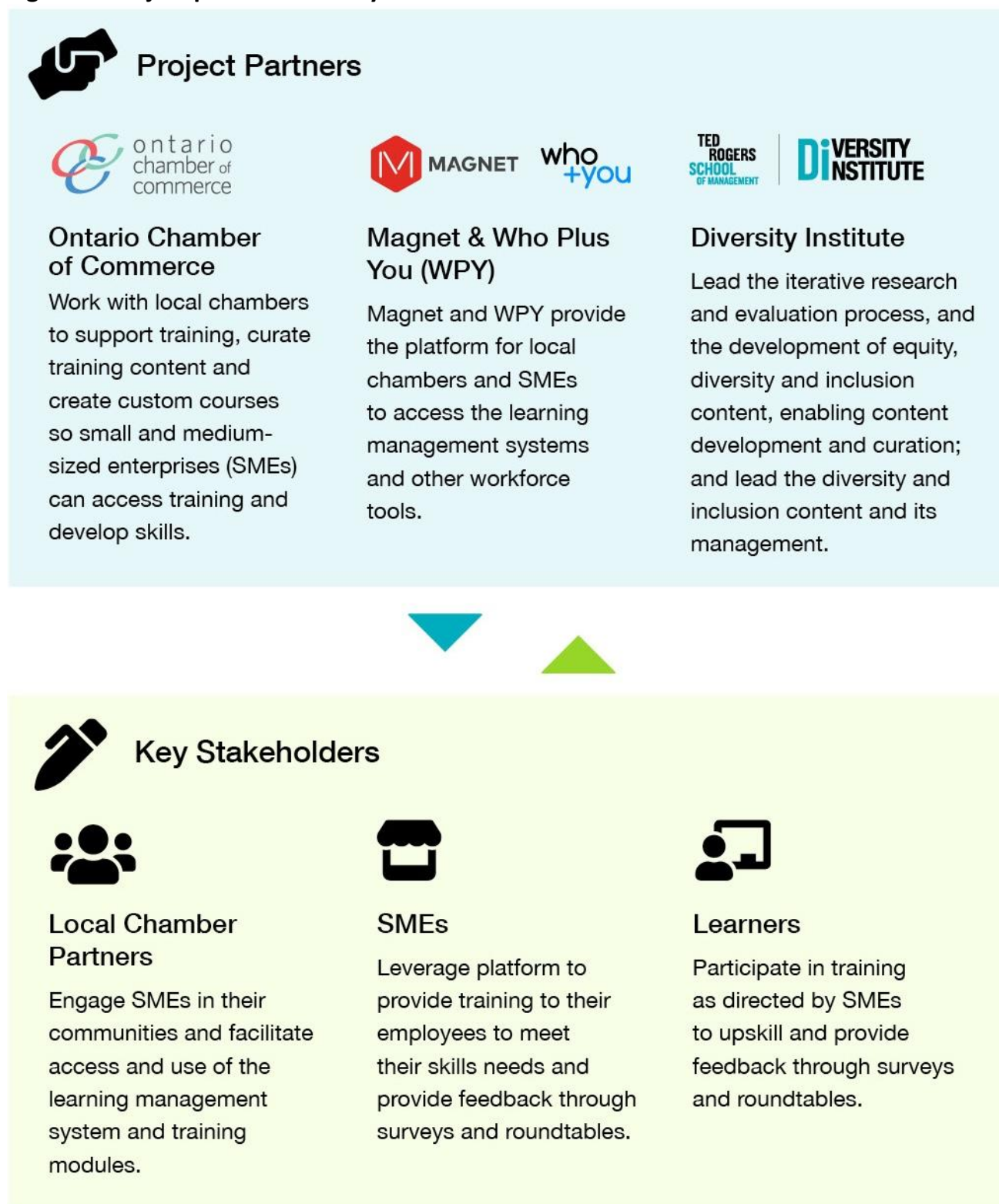
The Skills Bridge initiative was supported by a network of strategic partnerships that enabled broad SME engagement and effective program delivery. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce's extensive network of SMEs and chambers of commerce provided a substantial potential user base for the platform. A structured engagement model was implemented through formal partnerships with provincial and local chambers of commerce and boards of trade, established through memoranda of understanding that outlined roles, responsibilities, and funding tied to SME recruitment and participation. Provincial chamber networks played a key role in supporting broader outreach by promoting Skills Bridge within their local networks and facilitating connections between their chamber members and OCC staff.

OCC staff played a central role in onboarding SMEs onto the platform and sustaining participation, including following up with chambers to maintain recruitment efforts where engagement declined. The Diversity Institute contributed research-based guidance to inform curriculum development and provided evaluation expertise, ensuring that program design and implementation were grounded in evidence. This work was further informed by the Government of Canada's Skills for Success framework (Figure 3), aligning training content with nationally recognized competencies. Technical expertise was provided by Magnet and its technology partner WhoPlusYou, who developed a custom integration of the Docebo LMS into the Magnet Learning Centre (Figure 4). This integration enabled the creation of a centralized platform where content from multiple sources could be consolidated into a single, accessible learning environment.

Figure 4. Employment and Social Development Canada's Skills for Success



Figure 5. Project partners and key stakeholders

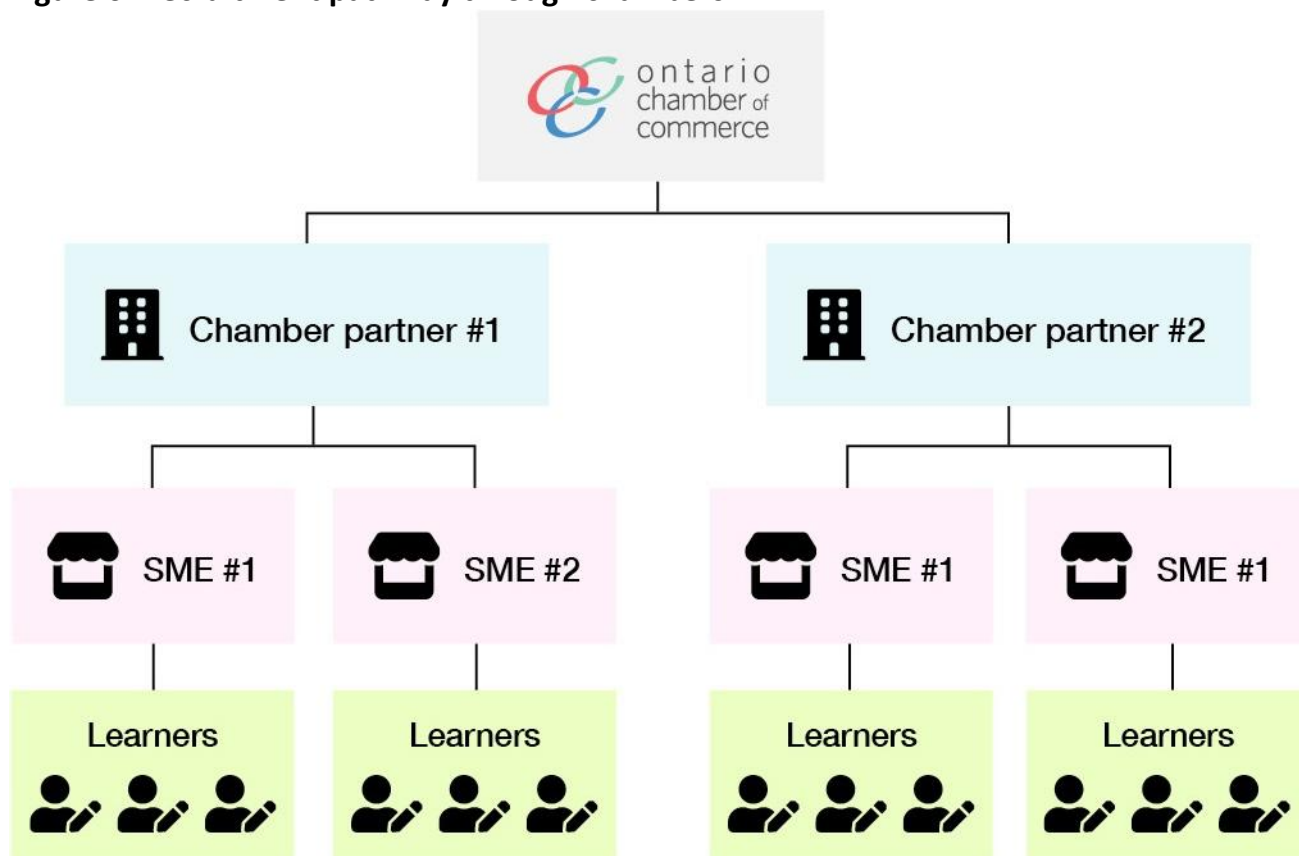


Participant recruitment

Recruitment methods evolved throughout the Skills Bridge project, reflecting lessons learned from earlier testing phases and ongoing refinements during the Beta phase. Initial recruitment relied on structured, chamber-mediated onboarding processes, while later approaches emphasized streamlined access and enhanced user experience. This adaptive approach enabled the program to improve efficiency, reduce administrative burdens, and strengthen engagement with participating SMEs over time. During the initial testing phases, recruitment and onboarding were highly coordinated between chambers of commerce and OCC staff. Chambers identified interested SMEs, after which OCC staff confirmed participation, facilitated consent processes, and manually registered participants across multiple learning platforms. While effective in ensuring oversight and engagement, this approach proved administratively intensive and highlighted the need for a more efficient and scalable model. In response to these early challenges, the Beta phase introduced a streamlined onboarding process. SMEs were provided with a single access point to the platform, supported by a unified login system that reduced the number of steps required to access training and minimized reliance on manual registration by OCC staff. This centralized approach improved usability and lowered barriers to participation, enabling more SMEs to engage with the Skills Bridge platform.

Chambers played a critical role in supporting recruitment and outreach. Chambers that participated in earlier project phases were invited to join the Skills Bridge Beta launch, alongside an additional 27 chambers from the OCC network and the Alberta Chambers of Commerce. In total, 82 chambers contributed to recruitment and engagement efforts. Chamber partners were provided with outreach materials, including invitation emails, social media posts, and course brochures, and received training from OCC staff on the Skills Bridge platform. These resources enabled chambers to effectively promote the program, recruit SMEs, and support participant engagement.

Figure 6. Recruitment pathway through chambers



Recruitment strategies during the Beta phase incorporated both direct platform access and personalized engagement. While earlier methods emphasized ease of access through self-registration, the introduction of a waitlist model in mid-2024 allowed OCC staff to connect directly with interested SMEs, providing tailored onboarding support and strengthening relationships through the chamber network. These dual approaches (self-directed access and supported onboarding) offered complementary benefits. Direct access improved efficiency and reduced barriers to entry, while personalized onboarding enhanced engagement and facilitated knowledge transfer for participating SMEs. Over time, program access was expanded to allow SMEs to register a greater number of employees, increasing participation and enabling broader uptake of training within organizations. Learners either self-enrolled in courses or were assigned specific training pathways by their SME leaders. Once registered, participants received regular reminders through the Targeted Messaging service on the Magnet platform, encouraging course completion and sustained engagement.

Through this iterative and partnership-driven approach, the Skills Bridge project successfully developed a flexible and scalable recruitment model that balanced efficiency with personalized support, thereby enhancing SME participation and strengthening the overall effectiveness of the program.

Program targets

A set of participation and training targets were established in the initial funding agreement with FSC. These targets included:

- Engaging 700 SMEs in training activities
- Supporting 1,200 learners
- Ensuring 50% of participating SMEs accessed EDI training
- Developing a training library of at least 30 courses organized into 13 learning pathways

As the project progressed, additional program extensions increased participation targets and expanded program deliverables. The Beta extension included the following targets:

- Supporting 200 SMEs with tools to attract and retain talent from equity-deserving groups
- Provide training opportunities for 600 additional learners within participating SMEs (in addition to the initial 1,200 learner target), while maintaining a focus on inclusion, including targets that 50% of learners engage in EDI training and that 50% of participants represent equity-deserving groups
- Expanding the content library through the development and curation of 65 English and 30 French courses, organized across 13+ learning pathways, including content related to AI adoption, decarbonization, governance, and EDI
- Enhancing learning delivery through the addition of eight webinars focused on EDI, AI, and trade, alongside the development of a broader webinar catalogue to support varied learning formats
- Strengthening the Skills Bridge ecosystem through expanded partnerships, including engagement with additional chamber partners (bringing total participation to over 80 chambers), as well as the development of four partnerships with industry associations and training providers and one partnership with an Indigenous organization
- Advancing platform sustainability and knowledge mobilization through the development of a Marketplace of Learning, integration of e-commerce functionality and dissemination of project learnings through initiatives such as the Skills Bridge Summit

Beta Program Evaluation

The main purpose of this evaluation was to examine the effectiveness of the Skills Bridge program in addressing the training and business support needs of Canadian SMEs, including how the effects of the changes to Skills Bridge in the Beta phase have affected its outcomes. The evaluation also examines whether the Skills Bridge model provides a scalable and effective approach for delivering skills development and training resources to SMEs.

Evaluation design

The evaluation used a longitudinal mixed-methods approach, collecting data at three time points during the project using a combination of surveys, interviews, and roundtable discussions.

The questions that this evaluation seeks to answer are:

1. To what extent has the OCC LMS project effectively recruited and engaged SMEs through chambers of commerce across the country?
2. To what extent does the LMS content affect the skills development of engaged SMEs?
3. How does this compare to the skills needs of SMEs?
4. To what extent does EDI training contribute to the improvement of diversity at SMEs?
5. What are the challenges or barriers to the access and use of the LMS?

Throughout the Skills Bridge program (June 1, 2023, and January 31, 2026), 1,854 learners from 1,527 SMEs engaged in training during the Beta phase, of which 1,362 learners from 1,036 SMEs engaged in training in the Skills Bridge asynchronous courses specifically. 53% of SMEs engaged in training (809 SMEs) received EDI training

Between April 1, 2025, and January 31, 2026, a period of scaling participation in Skills Bridge, 1,076 learners from 893 SMEs engaged in training during the Beta phase, of which 779 learners from 598 SMEs engaged in the Skills Bridge asynchronous courses. 64.3% of SMEs engaged in training (574 SMEs) received EDI training.

27 new chambers of commerce joined Skills Bridge during Beta, bringing the total number of participating chambers to 82.

Surveys

Surveys were used as a major source of data for the Skills Bridge evaluation. At registration, surveys were sent to all three participant groups (learners, SMEs and participating chambers of commerce). Learners received additional surveys, including post-course surveys to capture the learners' opinions on every course completed as well as an exit survey to capture their overall opinions of Skills Bridge at the end of the evaluation period and a self-assessment of their own skills post-training. SMEs also received an exit survey at the end of the evaluation period.

Learner surveys

Registration and exit surveys

The registration and exit surveys were tightly aligned to allow for comparison before and after program participation. They collected general demographic data, employment data, education data and self-assessed skills evaluation data. The skills data cover the following categories: communication, innovation, problem solving, reading, digital skills, collaboration, adaptability, writing, numeracy, equity diversity and inclusion, entrepreneurial skills, and management and supervision.

- Among learners, 300 completed the registration survey (34.9% of 860 registered learners), and 175 completed the exit survey (22.4% of 780 learners who engaged in courses).

Post-course and post-webinar surveys

The post-course surveys collected feedback from participants in the following areas: quality of course, barriers in accessibility, course interface, quality of content and usefulness of the course, as well as changes in understanding and usefulness of EDI concepts.

- A total of 1,405 post-course survey responses were collected (39.4% of 3,562 course completions), reflecting engagement at the course level where one learner could have taken multiple courses and completed multiple surveys.
- In addition, 212 responses were collected through post-webinar surveys (57% of 372 webinar participants).

SME surveys

Registration and exit surveys

SMEs were surveyed upon registration, collecting data on organizational characteristics such as: size, location, demographics of leadership, organizational policies and practices, and if the organization has skills training materials that could be leveraged for training. Additional questions were incorporated at later stages of data collection to capture data on barriers and enablers to participation, such as time constraints, platform usability, employee engagement, and the perceived relevance of training content.

- A total of 484 SMEs completed the registration survey (51.5% of 940 registered SMEs), while 233 SMEs completed the exit survey (24.8%), providing baseline and end-of-program organizational insights.

Chamber surveys

Registration surveys

Similarly to the SMEs, chambers of commerce were surveyed at registration. Chamber characteristics such as size of membership, sectors served, and location helped the project team understand the participating chambers. This information was and continues to be invaluable in continuing program improvement, particularly in ensuring the accessibility and relevance to a wide range of SMEs. The survey was also used to identify any opportunities to leverage existing training materials to be added to the training platform through collaborations.

- In total, 18 chambers who newly participated in the program completed the chamber registration survey (exactly two-thirds of the 27 new chambers who received the survey after joining in the Beta phase).ⁱⁱ

Roundtables

Nine roundtables with 55 participants in total were convened during the Beta phase, including one initial session, five midstream sessions (two of which focused specifically on EDI), and three final sessions. These roundtables brought together SMEs and learners to provide feedback on their experiences with the program. Key areas of discussion included the user experience (UX) of the LMS and the quality and relevance of training content. Discussions were guided by moderators using a structured guide developed by the Diversity Institute (DI) research team, ensuring consistency across sessions. Four core themes were explored throughout the roundtables: overall impressions of the program, course selection and skills improvement, overall impressions of the LMS including UX, and EDI-related content and experiences. All roundtables, along with interviews, were recorded, anonymized, and transcribed to support systematic analysis.

Interviews

Three sets of interviews (n = 24) were conducted at different stages of the Beta phase. In September 2024, interviews were held with SMEs, with a focus on EDI-related topics. Between November 2025 and February 2026, additional interviews were conducted with SMEs to gather deeper insights into user experience and barriers to skills training. In December 2025, interviews were also conducted with OCC program staff (n = 2) during the wind-down of the Beta phase. SME interviews focused on EDI, platform usability, and challenges related to accessing and engaging with training, while interviews with OCC staff explored successes and challenges in program execution, content development, participant engagement, barriers faced by SMEs, experiences working with external partners on technical solutions, and considerations for future program development.

Analysis and limitation

For the survey, we conducted descriptive and comparative quantitative analyses. For the interviews and roundtables, we conducted thematic analysis. Although using mixed methods offers the opportunity to have a profound understanding of the experiences of participants, there are two limitations: First, those who were not actively engaged were less likely to participate in the evaluation, and thus their experiences could be less represented in the findings. Second, the data were collected close to the completion of the program. Therefore, long-term impacts could not be captured in this evaluation.

ⁱⁱ Chambers who previously participated did not complete the survey.

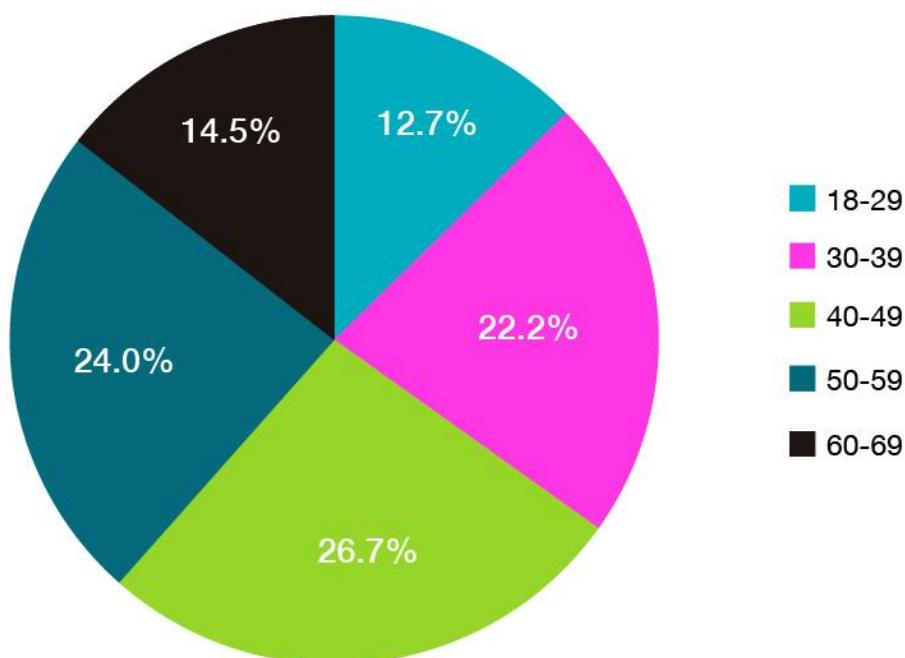
Findings

The OCC Skills Bridge LMS project demonstrated strong national reach and meaningful engagement among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through chambers of commerce. Evidence from program data indicates that the initiative successfully attracted a diverse cross-section of learners and businesses, exceeded key recruitment targets, and engaged equity-deserving groups. While participation was concentrated in certain provinces and among smaller firms, these patterns reflect the distribution of chamber networks, and the intended program focus on SMEs. Overall, the findings suggest that the project effectively leveraged chambers of commerce as trusted intermediaries to recruit and engage businesses across Canada.

Participant demographics: To what extent has the OCC LMS project effectively recruited and engaged SMEs through chambers of commerce across the country?

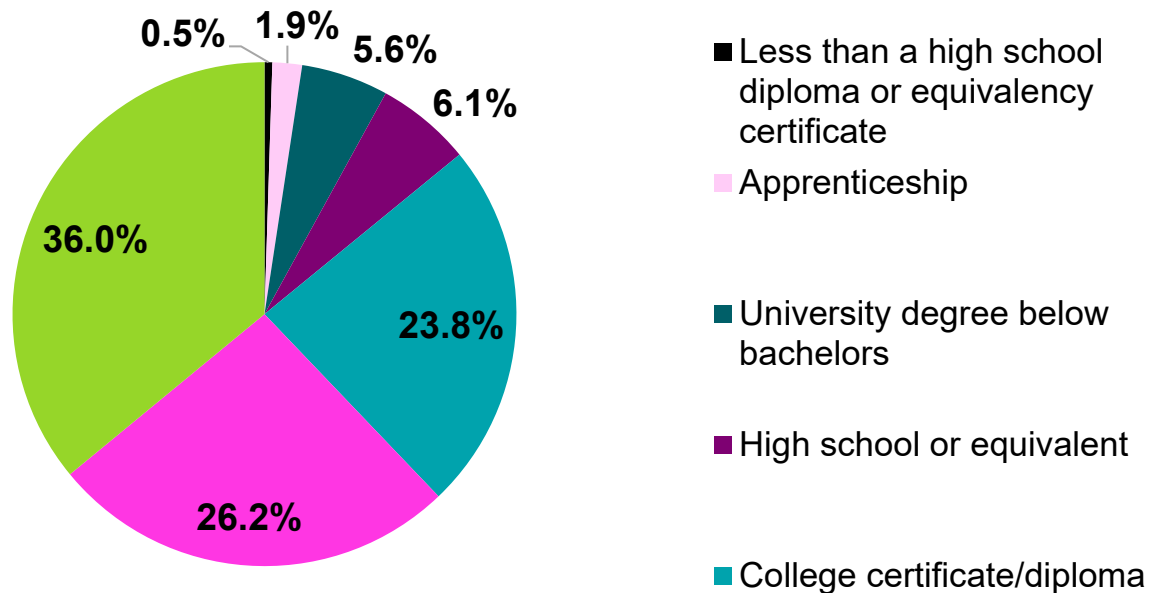
Understanding learner demographics provides insight into who engaged with the LMS and whether the program successfully reached its intended audience. The distribution of learner age groups indicates broad participation across career stages, with the largest segments falling between the ages of 40–49 (26.7%) and 50–59 (24%), followed by learners aged 30–39 (22.2%) (see Figure 6 for full age-group distribution).

Figure 7. Distribution of learner age groups



Educational attainment among learners was similarly diverse, reflecting engagement from individuals with varying levels of professional and academic backgrounds. A significant proportion of participants held a bachelor’s degree (36%) or a graduate or professional degree (26.2%), indicating strong uptake among highly skilled workers (Figure 8). At the same time, learners with college diplomas (23.8%) and high school credentials (6.1%) also participated, demonstrating the platform’s accessibility to individuals at different stages of educational attainment.

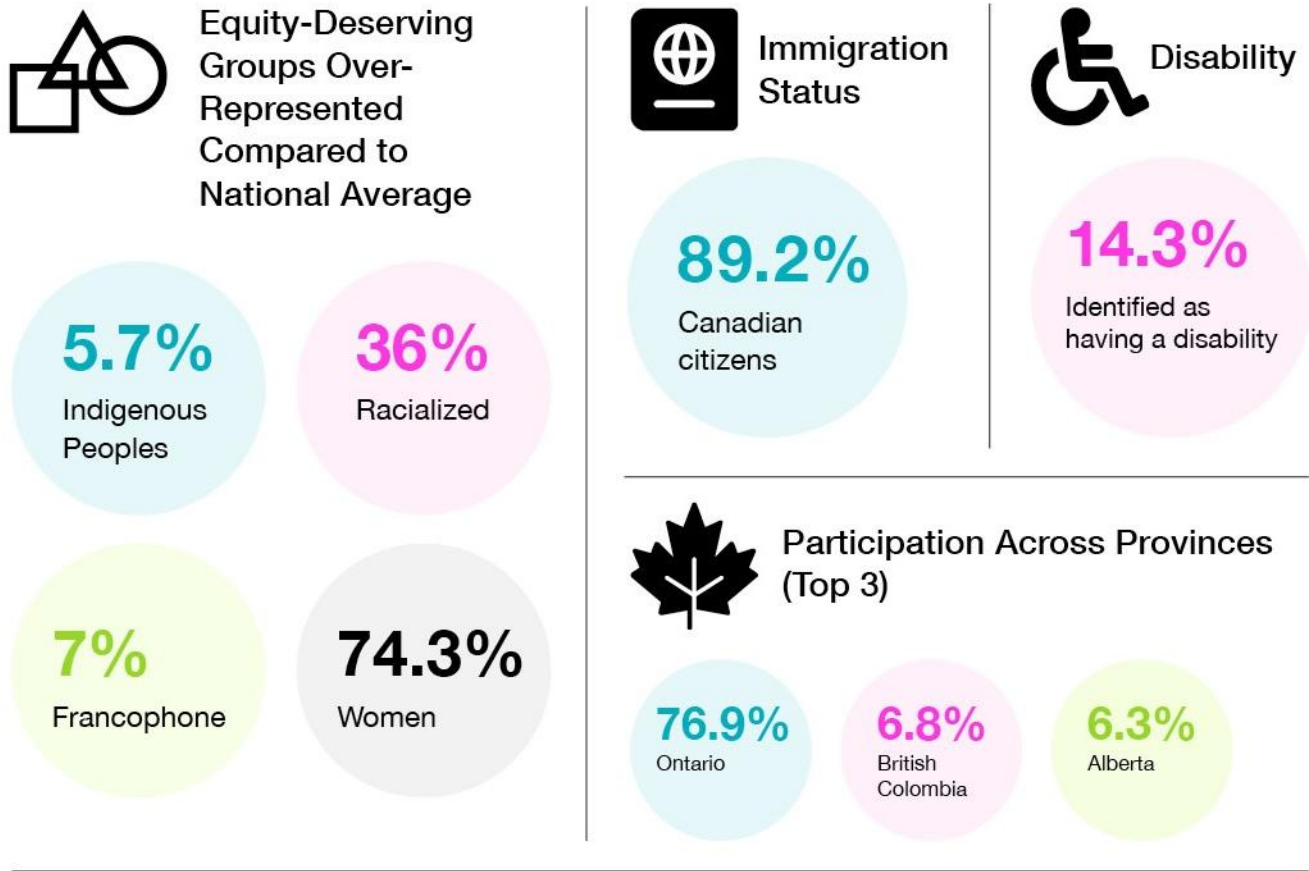
Figure 8 Distribution of learner educational attainment



A core objective of the OCC LMS project was to advance equitable access to training opportunities. Program data indicates meaningful engagement with equity-deserving groups, including women, racialized individuals, Indigenous Peoples and Francophones. Notably, women represented 74.3% of participants, while 36% identified as racialized. Indigenous participants accounted for 5.7% of learners, and 7% identified as Francophone (Figure 9). Additionally, 14.3% of respondents reported having a disability, further demonstrating the program’s accessibility and inclusivity.

Participation was primarily concentrated in Ontario (76.9%), followed by British Columbia (6.8%) and Alberta (6.3%). This distribution reflects the geographic reach of participating chambers and aligns with broader population patterns and partnership networks across Canada.

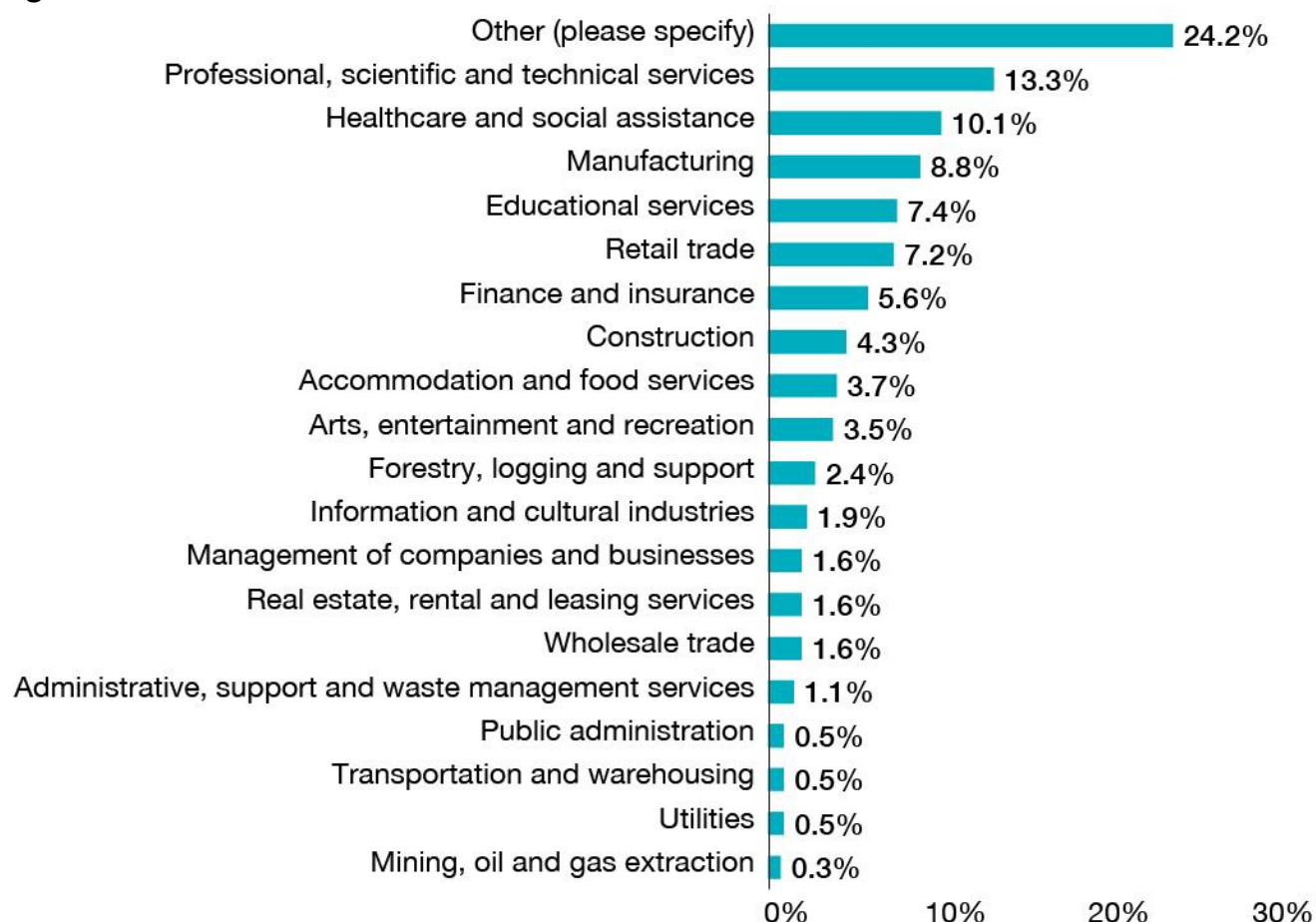
Figure 9. Learner demographic profile



SME characteristics

To assess the extent to which the OCC LMS effectively recruited SMEs, it is essential to examine the characteristics of participating businesses. The sectoral distribution demonstrates broad representation across the Canadian economy, with notable participation from professional, scientific and technical services; health care and social assistance; manufacturing; and educational services (Figure 9). The presence of organizations across multiple industries underscores the relevance and applicability of the LMS to diverse business contexts.

Figure 10. Business sector of SMEsⁱⁱⁱ

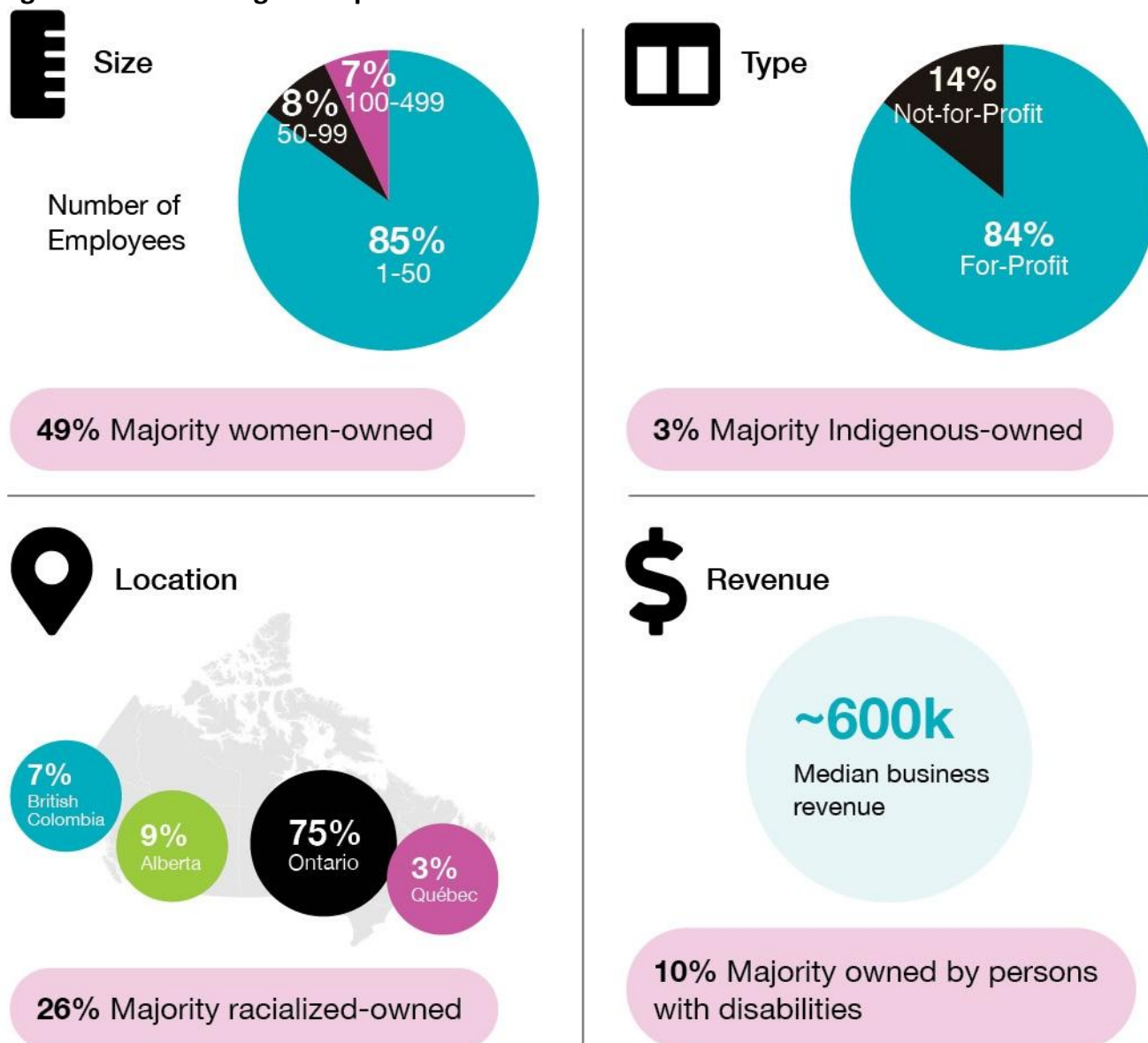


Further insights into SME characteristics reveal that the program successfully reached its intended audience of small businesses. The majority of participating organizations employed between 1 and 50 employees (85%), followed by firms with 50–99 employees (8%) and 100–499 employees (7%) (Figure 10). Most businesses were for-profit (84%), with a smaller proportion representing not-for-profit organizations (14%). Geographically, SME headquarters were concentrated in Ontario (75%), with additional participation from Alberta (9%), British Columbia (6.7%), and Quebec (3%).

In alignment with program objectives, SME ownership demographics reflected meaningful engagement with equity-deserving groups. Nearly half (49%) were majority women-owned, 26% were majority racialized-owned, 3% were Indigenous-owned, and 10% were majority-owned by persons with disabilities.

ⁱⁱⁱ Note: The most common sector under “other” was “non-profit” (n = 10) followed by “legal” (n = 2). The rest were all single entries (e.g., social services, government and immigration).

Figure 11. Skills Bridge SME profile



Role of chambers in recruitment and engagement

Chambers of commerce served as critical partners in recruiting and engaging SMEs. Their trusted networks and established relationships enabled efficient outreach and facilitated participation. While the sample of chambers included in the analysis was limited primarily to Ontario and Alberta, the findings highlight their importance as a delivery mechanism. More than 90% of responding chambers (18 of 27 who joined during Beta) had fewer than 800 members (and 40% had less than 300), underscoring their close connections to local business communities.

Chambers played a central role in promoting the program, supporting recruitment, and fostering engagement. However, variation in chamber capacity required tailored supports and differentiated engagement strategies to maximize participation and scalability.

Recruitment and engagement outcomes

The OCC Skills Bridge program exceeded its recruitment, engagement, and equity targets during the Beta phase and extension period. A total of 1,527 SMEs participated in training activities, surpassing the original target of 700, while 1,854 learners engaged in training, 654 more than initially projected. Since April 1, 2025, 1,076 learners have participated in training, significantly exceeding the extension target of 600. The program also met and surpassed several EDI deliverables. Notably, 53% of SMEs engaged in training received EDI-related supports, and 44.3% of registered SMEs participated in EDI training. In total, 809 SMEs received EDI training, far exceeding the extension target of 200 SMEs. Additionally, 57.2% of learners participated in EDI training, surpassing the program target of 50%. For a detailed breakdown of all targets and results see Table 1.

Table 1. Detailed breakdown of Skills Bridge Beta targets and outcomes

Performance Indicator	Program Target	Actual Outcome	Result
SMEs trained	700 SMEs (200 Phases 1-4; 200 initial Beta; 300 Beta extension)	1,527 SMEs (Beta Only)	Exceeded target by 827 SMEs
Learners trained, including equity-deserving groups	1,200 learners (600 initial Beta; 600 Beta extension)	1,854 learners	Exceeded target by 654 learners
Additional learners trained during Beta extension (since April 1, 2025)	600 learners	1,076 learners	Exceeded target by 476 learners
SMEs receiving EDI training or resources	50% of SMEs	53% of SMEs	Target exceeded by 3 percentage points
SMEs supported with training and tools to attract and retain talent from equity-deserving groups	200 SMEs	809 SMEs	Exceeded target by 609 SMEs
Learners engaged in EDI training	50% of learners	57.2% of learners	Exceeded target by 7.2 percentage points
Promotion of program	300 SMEs and 600 learners	803 SMEs and 1,055 learners received promotion/relevant resources	Exceeded targets by 503 SMEs and 455 learners
Learners from equity-deserving groups, including women	50% of learners	74.3% Women 5.7% Indigenous Peoples 36% Racialized 14.3% Persons with Disability 10.4% 2SLGBTQ+	Target exceeded by over 30%
Chamber partners engaged	54 chambers (50 original; 4 Beta extension)	82 total: 55 original + 27 new	Target exceeded

Performance Indicator	Program Target	Actual Outcome	Result
Partnerships with industry associations and/or training providers	4 partnerships	4 partnerships	Target met
Partnership with an Indigenous organization	1 partnership	Partnered with NACCA to build a course.	Target met
Courses in the content library	30 courses (original); expanded to 65 in English and 30 in French	115 courses in content library (64 in English, 51 in French); 2 courses removed in December 2025; 5 courses in development for addition by April 30, 2026 (Appendix A).	Target exceeded
Learning pathways developed	13 pathways covering 13 skills areas	22 in English, 18 in French (Appendix B)	Target exceeded
Online catalogue of webinars	Established during Beta extension	Achieved ^{iv}	Target met
Additional webinars on EDI, AI and trade	8 webinars	Achieved (Appendix C)	Target met
Sustainable marketplace of skills, talent, and supports (Magnet platform)	Developed with select partners and industry associations	Achieved	Target met
Integration of e-commerce functionality	Integrated into the LMS ecosystem	Achieved	Target met
Skills Bridge Summit organized	1 national summit	September 23, 2025 ^v	Target met

Interview data (recruitment and engagement)

Awareness of the program was uneven across chamber networks, with some participants indicating limited visibility and inconsistent promotion. As one SME participant explained, “I’ve spoken to other businesses in my network and none of them had even heard of it. It just wasn’t something that was being talked about or promoted, at least not in the circles I’m part of.” This suggests that recruitment effectiveness varied depending on how actively chambers promoted the program. Recruitment and engagement were significantly strengthened through direct, personalized outreach, with participants consistently indicating that passive channels (e.g., email, newsletters) were insufficient on their own. One SME participant described that “Getting both the email and then a follow-up call made a difference, because otherwise it’s just another email that gets lost, but the combination kind of

^{iv} Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLN48TPZKKpg6azR1gk7gUC5A2BUyvsW3G>

^v Event link: <https://fsc-ccf.ca/event/fsc-at-skills-bridge/>

pushed me to actually go in and respond”, highlighting the importance of multi-channel follow-up. Engagement was not a one-time outcome of recruitment, but required ongoing interaction and reinforcement, as participants described needing reminders and repeated touchpoints to sustain participation, particularly given competing business priorities.

Interview data suggests that relationship-based outreach improved engagement, particularly where communication felt direct and personalized. As one participant noted, “The phone calls made a big difference because it didn’t feel like a generic program anymore, it felt like someone was actually checking in and that made me more likely to stay engaged.” However, this relationship-based approach also introduced variability, as engagement depended in part on the capacity and activity of individual chambers, contributing to differences in awareness and uptake across regions.

Overall, the OCC Skills Bridge LMS project effectively recruited and engaged SMEs through chambers of commerce across Canada. The program surpassed recruitment targets reached a diverse and inclusive participant base and engaged businesses across multiple sectors and regions. Chambers of commerce proved to be a highly effective delivery mechanism, leveraging trusted relationships to facilitate outreach and participation. While regional disparities and variations in chamber capacity highlight opportunities for further expansion, the findings demonstrate that the Skills Bridge successfully advanced workforce development, supported SMEs, and promoted equitable access to training nationwide.

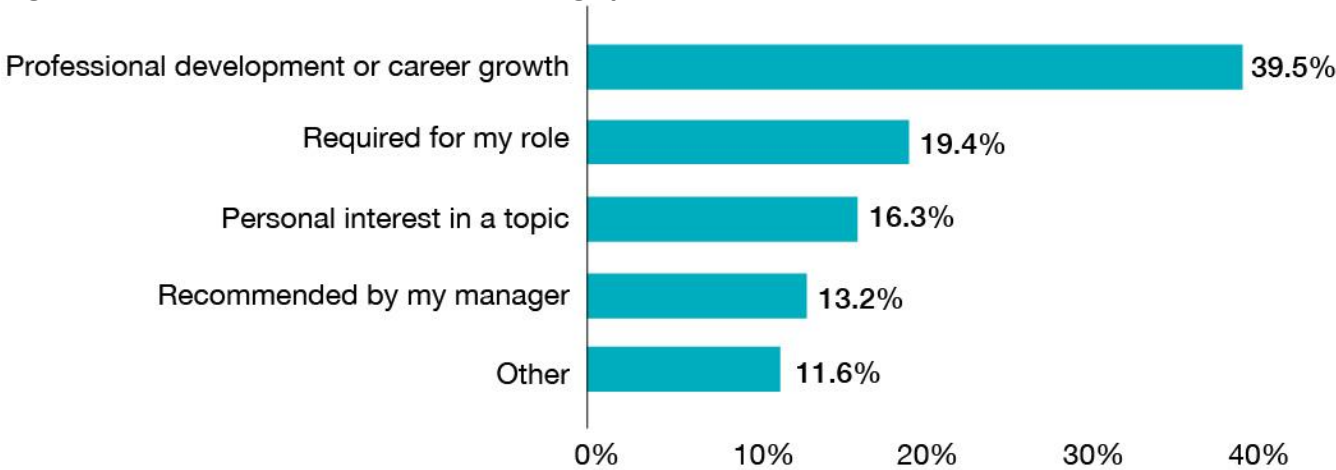
Skills development: To what extent does the LMS content affect the skills development of engaged SMEs?

The OCC Skills Bridge LMS has had a meaningful impact on the skills development of engaged SMEs by providing accessible, relevant, and practical training aligned with workforce and organizational needs. Evidence from learner surveys, course participation data, and qualitative feedback indicates that the platform supports professional growth, enhances workplace competencies, and strengthens business capacity. Improvements in self-reported skills, strong engagement with industry-relevant courses and webinars, and positive feedback from participants demonstrate the LMS’s effectiveness in fostering continuous learning and supporting SME competitiveness.

Motivations for engaging in training

Learners primarily engaged with the LMS to enhance their professional capabilities and support career advancement. Professional development and career growth emerged as the leading motivation (39.5%), followed by role requirements (19.4%), personal interest in specific topics (16.3%) and recommendations from managers (13.2%) (Figure 11). These findings suggest that learners perceived the LMS as both a strategic tool for workforce development and a resource for individual upskilling. The strong emphasis on career advancement highlights the platform’s value in supporting skills acquisition that is directly applicable to workplace success.

Figure 12. Learner motivations for taking specific courses



Alignment of LMS content with SME skill needs

The popularity of specific courses during the Beta phase highlights the alignment between LMS offerings and the evolving needs of SMEs. The most completed courses focused on leadership, governance, communication, AI, cybersecurity, financial management and human resources, areas critical to organizational resilience and growth. The inclusion of topics such as AI for Canadian SMEs and EDI reflects the program’s responsiveness to emerging labour market trends and inclusive business practices. Similarly, webinar participation demonstrates strong interest in timely and practical topics that address current workplace challenges. High attendance in sessions related to responsible AI, workforce shortages, EDI and employee engagement indicates that SMEs are actively seeking knowledge to navigate technological change and foster inclusive workplaces (Figures 12 and 13).

Figure 13. Most popular courses in the Beta phase

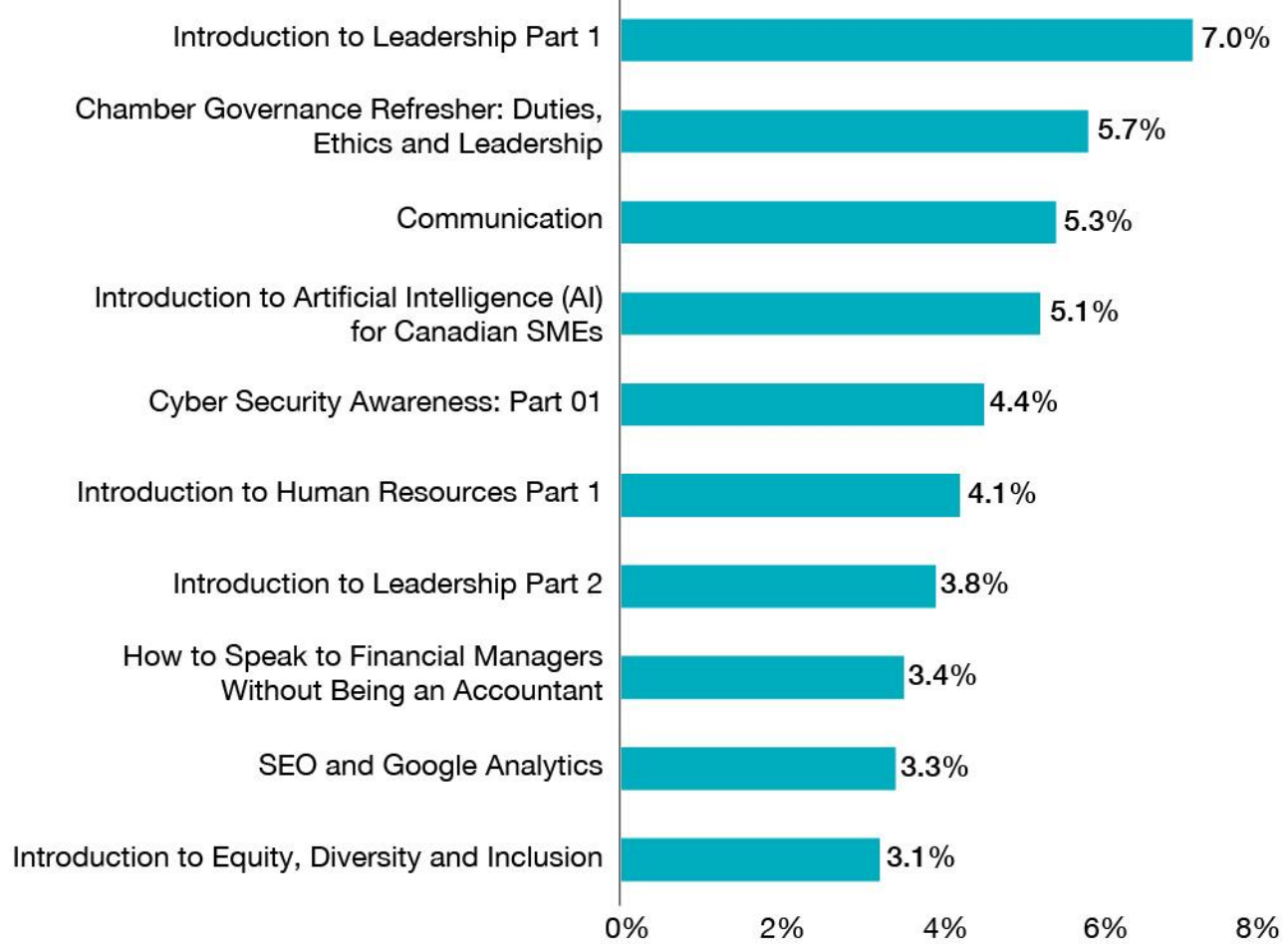


Figure 14 Most popular webinars in Beta phase



Improvements in self-reported skills

Survey data reveal measurable gains in learners' self-reported skill levels across a broad range of competencies. Improvements were observed both overall and across key categories such as communication, innovation, problem solving, digital skills, collaboration, adaptability, numeracy, EDI, entrepreneurial skills, and management and supervision. The most notable increases were observed in analytical, financial and innovation-related skills. Learners reported greater confidence in analyzing numerical data, understanding budgets and costs, interpreting financial information and developing new products and services, competencies that are essential for informed decision-making and business growth. While most competencies improved, minor decreases were reported in a small number of areas, including giving brief presentations, persuading others, and evaluating the accuracy or credibility of information. These changes were limited and may reflect increased self-awareness among learners following training. Overall, the findings suggest that participation in Skills Bridge contributed positively to skills development, particularly in areas directly linked to business performance (Figures 14 and 15).

Figure 15. Mean self-reported skills ratings before and after Beta (Top 5)^{vi}

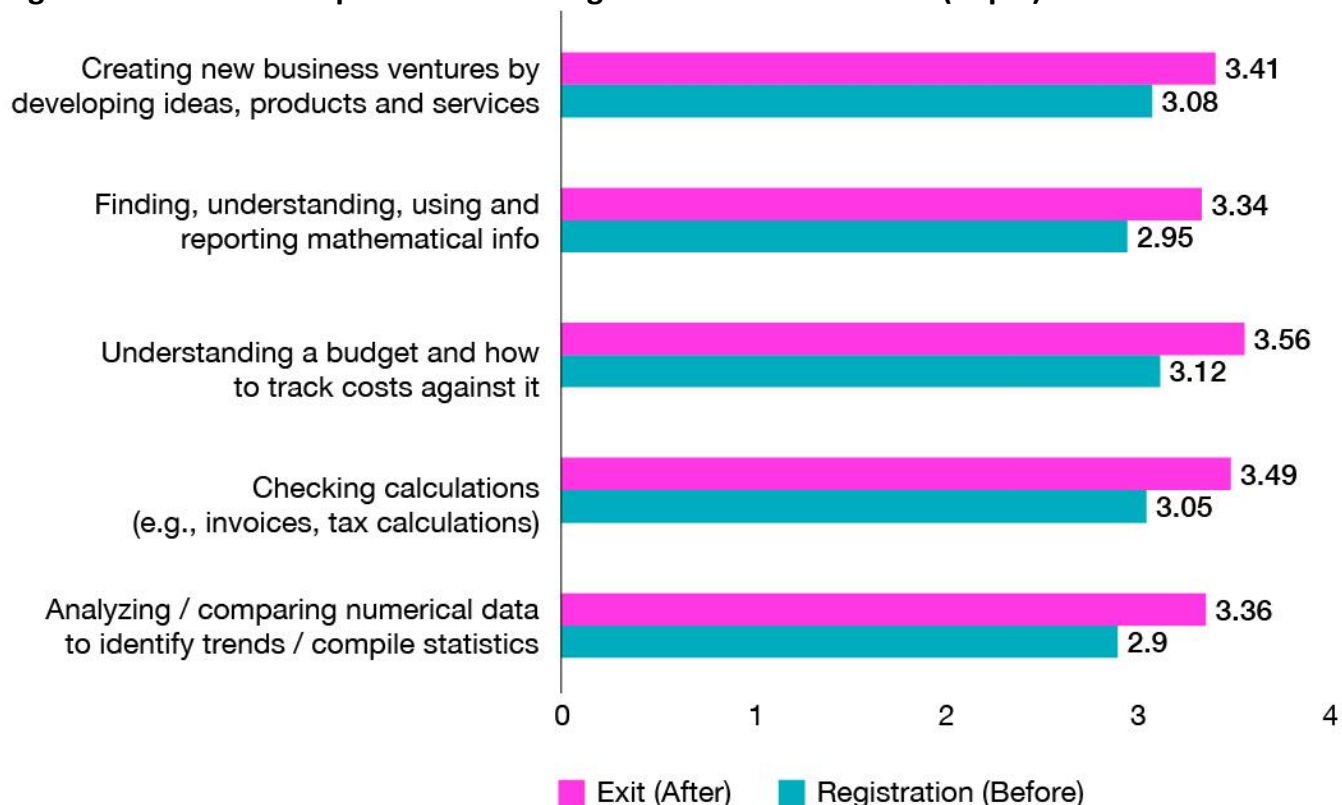
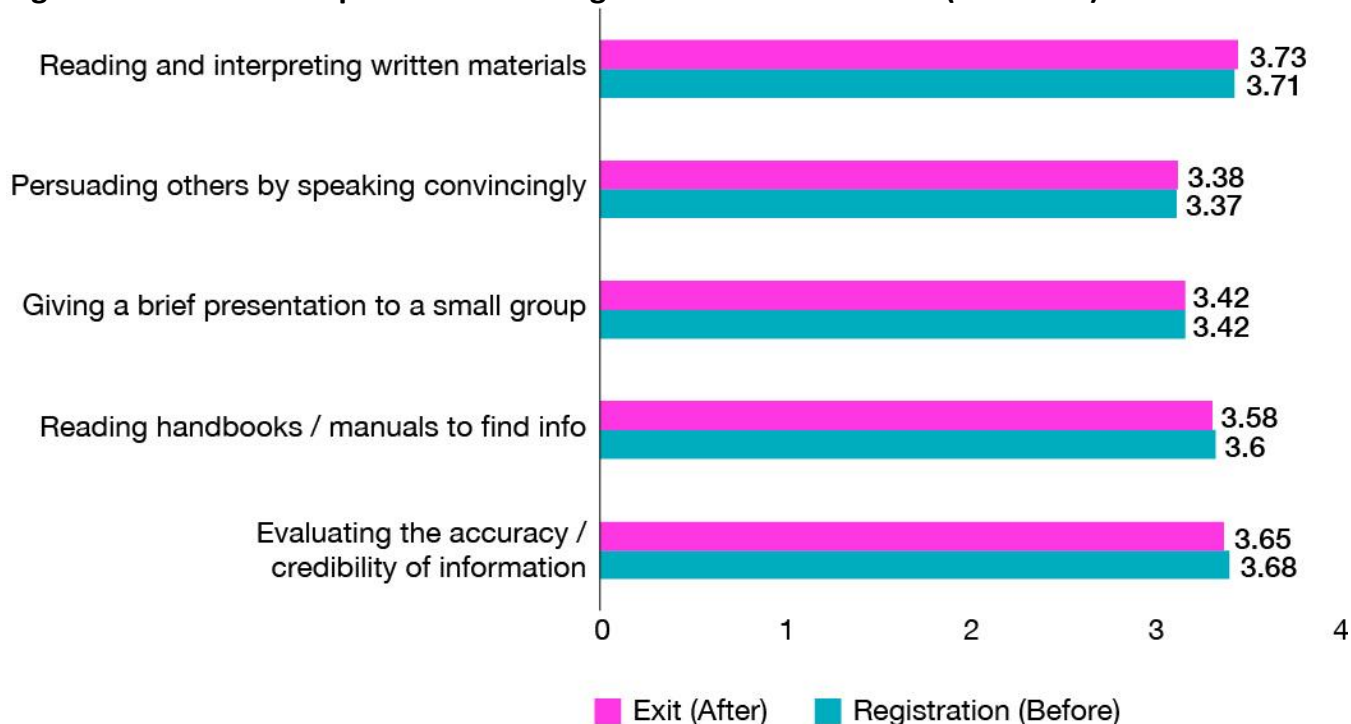


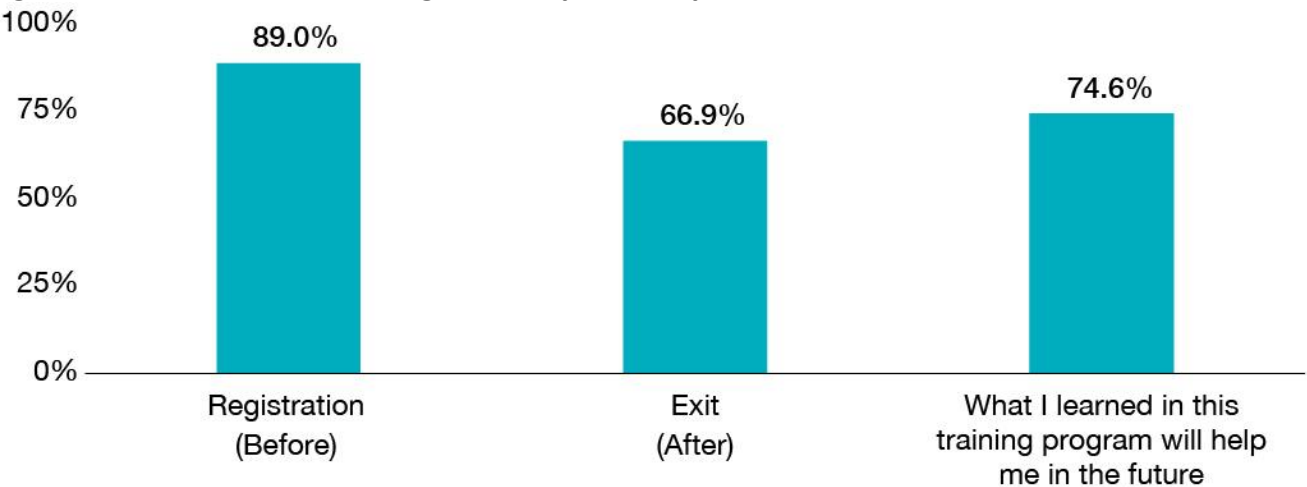
Figure 16. Mean self-reported skills ratings before and after Beta (Bottom 5)



^{vi} Self-reported skill measures should be interpreted with caution, as they are subject to response bias and may capture changes in confidence or self-assessment standards rather than objective skill development.

Learners’ perceptions of their job readiness provide additional insight into Skills Bridge’s effectiveness. Following training, respondents were slightly less likely to report that they already possessed all the skills required to perform well in their current roles. This shift may indicate heightened awareness of skills gaps after exposure to new knowledge and competencies. Importantly, a substantial proportion of learners expressed confidence that the training would support their future professional development (Figure 16). This pattern suggests that skills training received through Skills Bridge not only enhanced skills but also encouraged continuous learning by helping participants identify areas for further growth.

Figure 16. Confidence in having skills required to perform well in current and future roles



Focus groups and roundtables revealed that participants generally viewed the content as informative and relevant but emphasized that its impact depended on how directly it could be applied in practice, particularly within time-constrained SME environments. As one participant explained, “If I’m going to spend time on something like this, it has to be directly useful to what I’m doing day-to-day... not just interesting, but something I can actually take and apply right away in my business.” Participants also indicated that learning outcomes were more limited when content was too general or not tailored to their specific context, with one noting that “A lot of it was good information, but it felt quite broad... it didn’t always connect to the specific challenges we’re dealing with in our business.” The ability to translate learning into practice varied across participants, suggesting that content design (i.e., the inclusion of applied examples, case-based learning and actionable steps) is a key driver of impact. As one participant reflected, “It’s helpful when you can see exactly how something would work in a real situation, otherwise it’s harder to take that next step and actually use it.” Participants also highlighted that content perceived as immediately relevant or tied to current business challenges had the greatest impact, reinforcing the importance of aligning course offerings with evolving SME needs.

Overall, the Skills Bridge LMS content has had a positive and measurable impact on the skills development of engaged SMEs. High participation in professionally relevant courses and webinars, coupled with improvements in self-reported competencies, demonstrates the platform’s effectiveness in supporting workforce development and organizational growth. While minor declines in certain communication-related skills could be caused by increased self-awareness among learners, this is a gap for further exploration. Nevertheless, qualitative feedback confirms that the training was valued

for its practical applicability and relevance. Continued emphasis on tailored, actionable and industry-specific content will further enhance the Skills Bridge's capacity to strengthen SME competitiveness and support inclusive economic development.

Alignment to SME Needs: How does this compare to the skills needs of SMEs?

The OCC Skills Bridge LMS demonstrates strong alignment with the evolving skills needs of SMEs by delivering practical, relevant and flexible training. SMEs require professional development opportunities that balance demonstrable skill acquisition with limited time availability. As a result, modular, stackable learning pathways have proven particularly effective in supporting flexible engagement. Over time, demand has also grown for more advanced and specialized content such as AI, governance and EDI, highlighting the importance of progressive learning structures and iterative content development.

Figure 18. Respondent ratings of course and webinar content



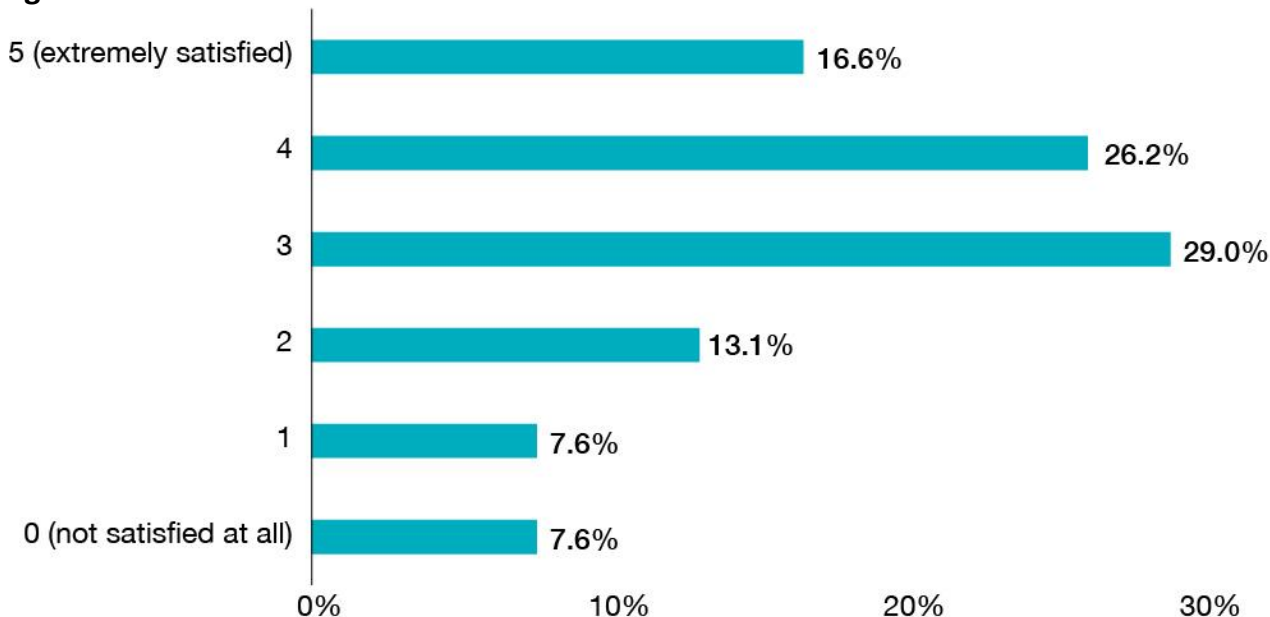
Survey findings indicate that SMEs engaged with Skills Bridge primarily to strengthen workforce capabilities, enhance organizational performance, and support strategic growth. The most frequently cited objective was training employees in needed skills to create business value, followed by exposing staff to new concepts and ideas, motivating continuous learning, and building company culture. These findings underscore the LMS's effectiveness in addressing both immediate operational needs and long-term workforce development goals (Figure 19).

Figure 19. SME motivations for enrolling employees in LMS



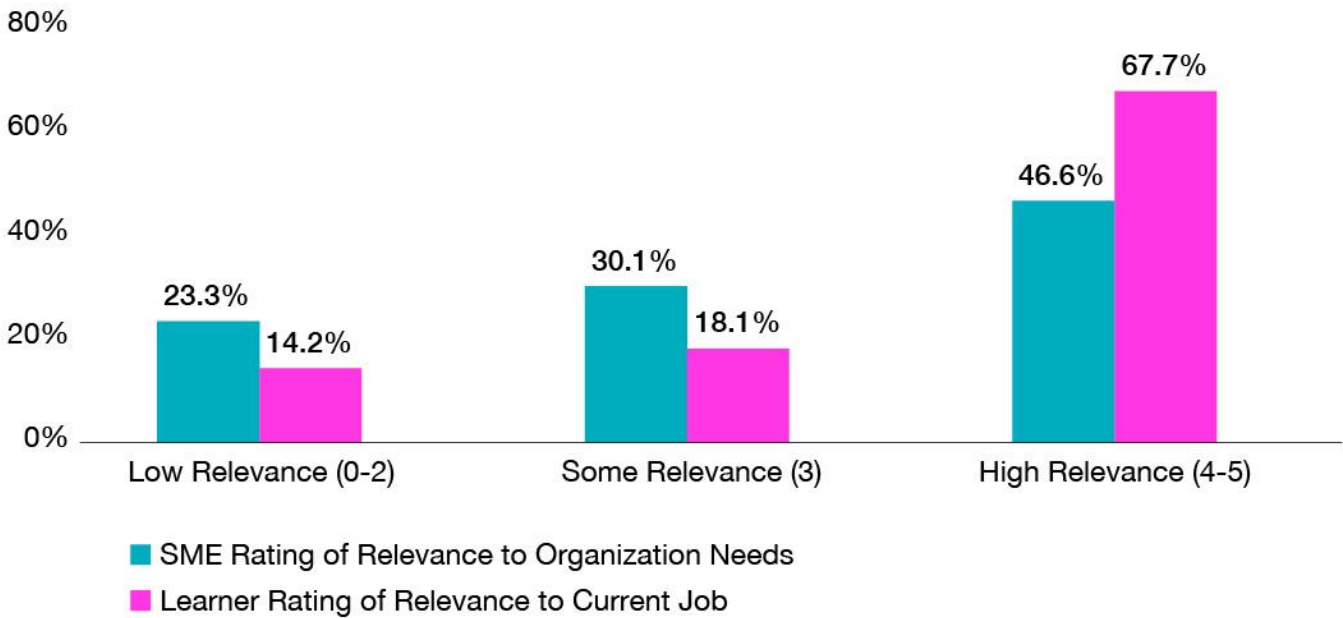
Overall satisfaction with Skills Bridge courses was high, with the majority of SMEs reporting moderate to high levels of satisfaction. Ratings clustered between 3 and 5 on a five-point scale, reflecting strong approval of course quality and relevance. These findings further confirm that the LMS effectively meets SME expectations and supports meaningful skills development (Figure 20).

Figure 20. SME satisfaction with courses



Both SMEs and learners reported that Skills Bridge content was highly relevant to organizational and professional contexts. The majority of respondents rated courses as having high relevance to their current roles and business needs, indicating that the platform effectively supports practical skill development and workplace performance. Although the proportions of SMEs and learners reported the relevance are different, the pattern demonstrated in the figure confirms that the LMS addresses real-world SME challenges and contributes to organizational growth (Figure 21).

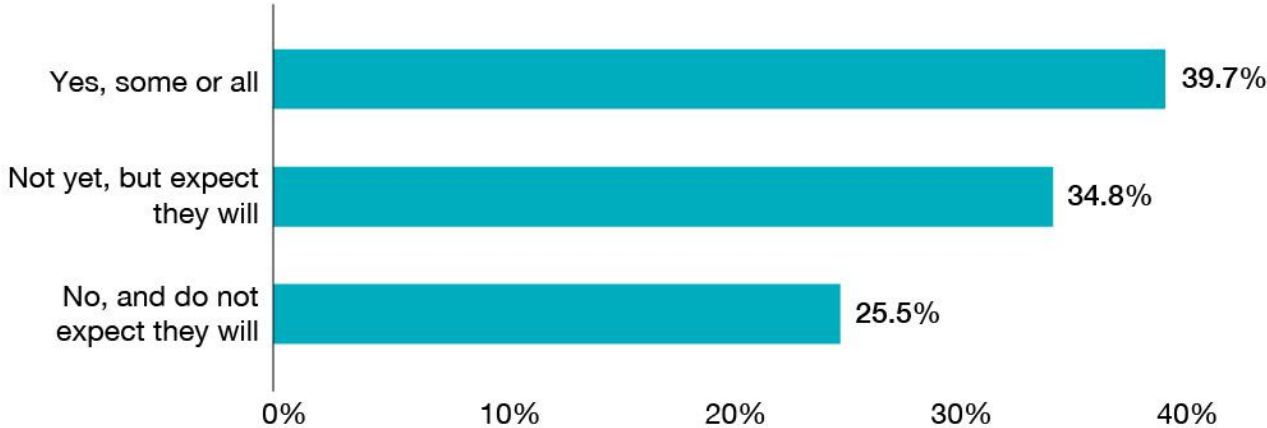
Figure 21. SME and learner ratings of course relevance



Application of learning in the workplace

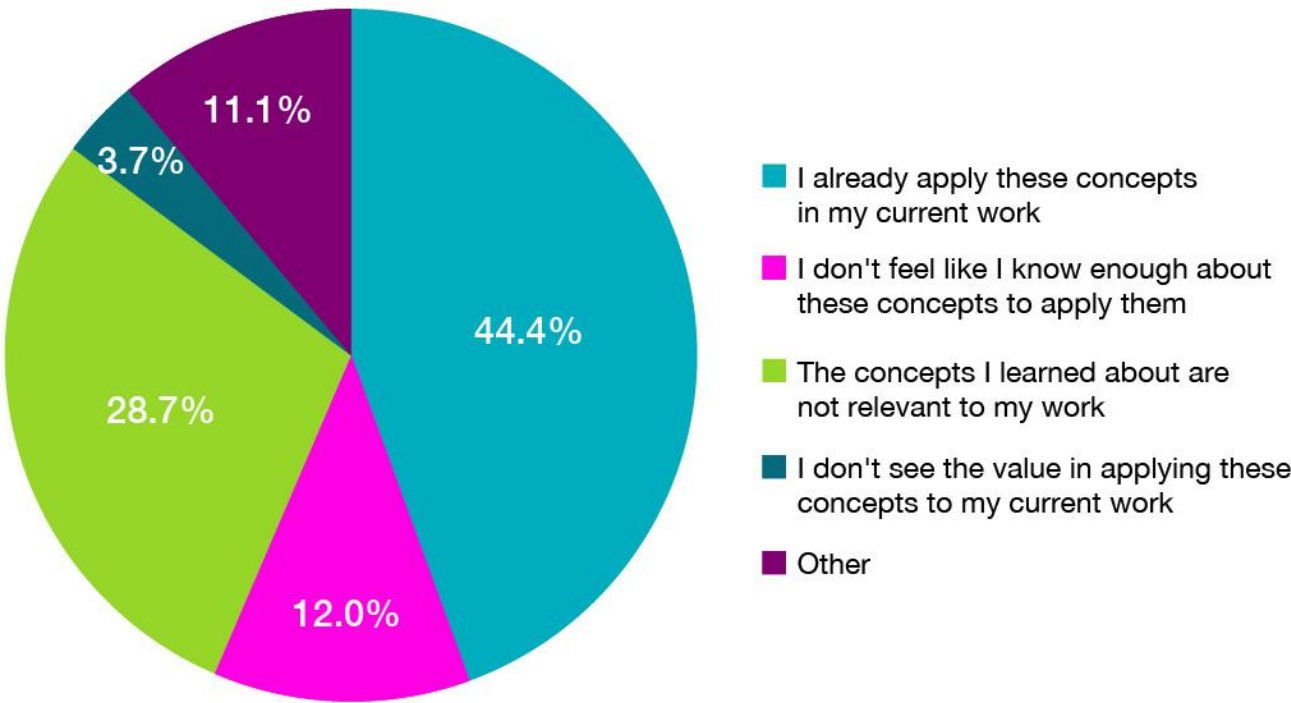
A critical indicator of alignment with SME needs is the extent to which training translates into workplace practice. Nearly 40% of SMEs reported that employees had already applied course learnings to their work, while an additional 34.8% expected application in the future (Figure 22). These findings demonstrate both immediate and anticipated returns on training investments, highlighting the Skills Bridge’s relevance and practical value.

Figure 22 Employee application of course learnings to their work



While most participants found the training valuable, some reported challenges in applying course content directly to their work. The most common reason was that learners were already applying the concepts in their roles, followed by perceptions that the content was not directly relevant or lacked sufficient depth for implementation. These findings suggest opportunities to enhance sector-specific content and provide more advanced learning pathways (Figure 23).

Figure 23. Reasons learners have not applied course material to their work



Interviews and roundtables provide further context. SMEs identified a need for more targeted and sector-relevant content, noting that while the platform offered broadly applicable material, it did not always align with the specific contexts of their businesses. As one participant explained, “A lot of it felt very general, like it was designed for any business, but not necessarily for the kind of work we actually do day-to-day.” There was strong demand for more advanced and specialized training, particularly in areas such as leadership, governance, and AI, reflecting the evolving needs of SMEs beyond

foundational skills. One participant noted, “Once you’ve gone through the basics, you want something that goes deeper... something that actually helps you make decisions or change how you’re running things.”

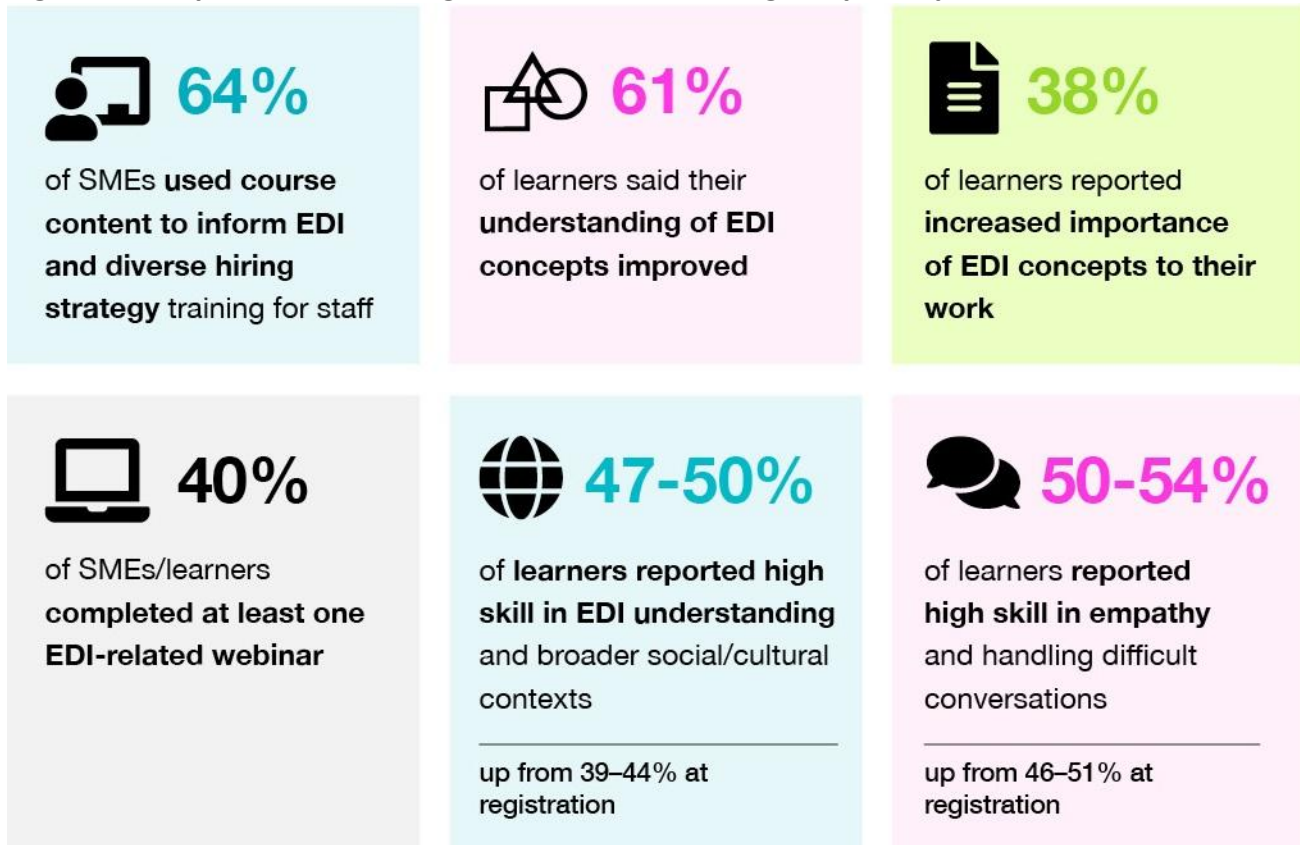
Participants also emphasized the importance of practical application and real-world relevance, indicating that content should move beyond introductory knowledge toward implementation. As one participant put it, “It’s not that the information isn’t useful, it’s just that you need that next step... how do I actually use this in my business, what does that look like in practice?” There was also a preference for modular and progressive learning pathways that allow SMEs to build skills incrementally, particularly given time constraints and varying levels of prior knowledge.

Overall, the OCC Skills Bridge LMS demonstrates strong alignment with the skills needs of SMEs. High levels of satisfaction, strong relevance ratings, and evidence of practical application indicate that the platform effectively supports workforce development and organizational growth. SMEs value the LMS for its flexibility, accessibility, and high-quality content. While opportunities exist to expand advanced, sector-specific and implementation-focused training, the findings confirm that the LMS is well-positioned to address the evolving needs of Canadian SMEs and contribute to their long-term competitiveness.

EDI Training: To what extent does EDI training contribute to the improvement of diversity at SMEs?

EDI courses were well received, as nearly 60% of learners reported improved understanding and 38% reported increased importance of EDI concepts. There were modest gains in self-reported EDI skills, with the largest in understanding prevailing social, economic, political and cultural contexts. More than one-third of respondents found EDI concepts to be more important than they did before, and 6 in 10 said EDI concepts remained just as important as they were before taking courses (Figure 24).

Figure 24. Impact of Skills Bridge on the EDI knowledge of participants

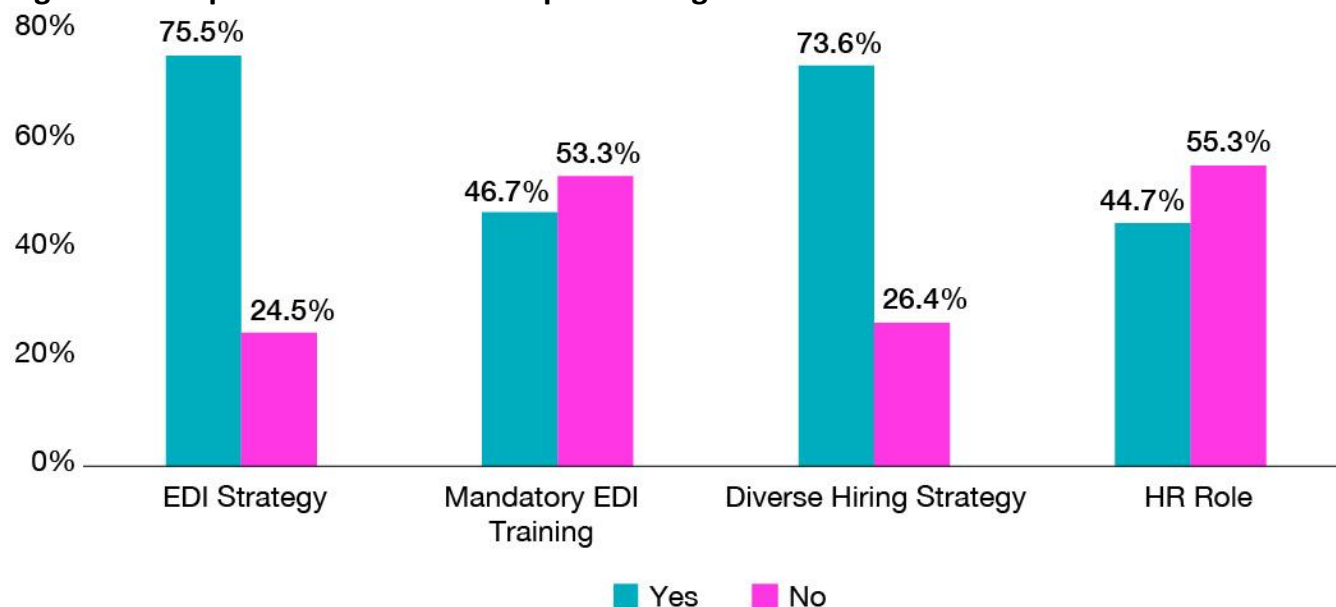


However, a comparison of baseline and exit survey data indicates minimal change across key EDI metrics. While 61% of learners found that their understanding of EDI concepts has improved, nearly 4 in 10 learners reported their understanding of EDI had stayed the same. The proportion of SMEs reporting an EDI strategy (75.5% to 24.5%) and mandatory EDI training (46.7% to 53.3%) remained largely stable. Similarly, the presence of diverse hiring strategies showed a slight increase from 73.6% to 75.2%, while the proportion of organizations with a dedicated HR role declined modestly from 44.7% to 41%. Overall, these findings suggest that participants entered the program with established EDI practices, and that structural organizational changes in these areas were limited over the program period (Figure 25).

Participants generally recognized the importance of EDI-related content, particularly in supporting inclusive workplace practices, but indicated that engagement with standalone EDI training was mixed, depending on how directly it connected to their business needs. Some participants suggested that EDI content was more effective when integrated into broader business topics, rather than presented as separate modules. As one participant explained, “It’s important, but when it’s just its own thing, it can feel a bit disconnected... it probably works better when it’s part of something else you’re already trying to do in the business.” Others noted that while EDI concepts were valuable, the content would benefit from more practical guidance and real-world application, particularly in translating principles into workplace practices. Participants also emphasized that training alone is insufficient to drive change without organizational support, particularly leadership buy-in and dedicated time for implementation. As one participant noted, “It really has to come from those that are in leadership... allowing staff the time that’s needed to be able to do the courses.” Relatedly, participants highlighted a gap between awareness and implementation, indicating that while training builds understanding, additional support

is needed to translate learning into organizational change. Finally, some participants expressed a need for continued engagement beyond one-off training, suggesting that opportunities for follow-up discussion or communities of practice would help reinforce learning and support application over time.

Figure 25. Proportion of SMEs that report having various EDI-related resources



Challenges and Barriers: What are the challenges or barriers to the access and use of the LMS?

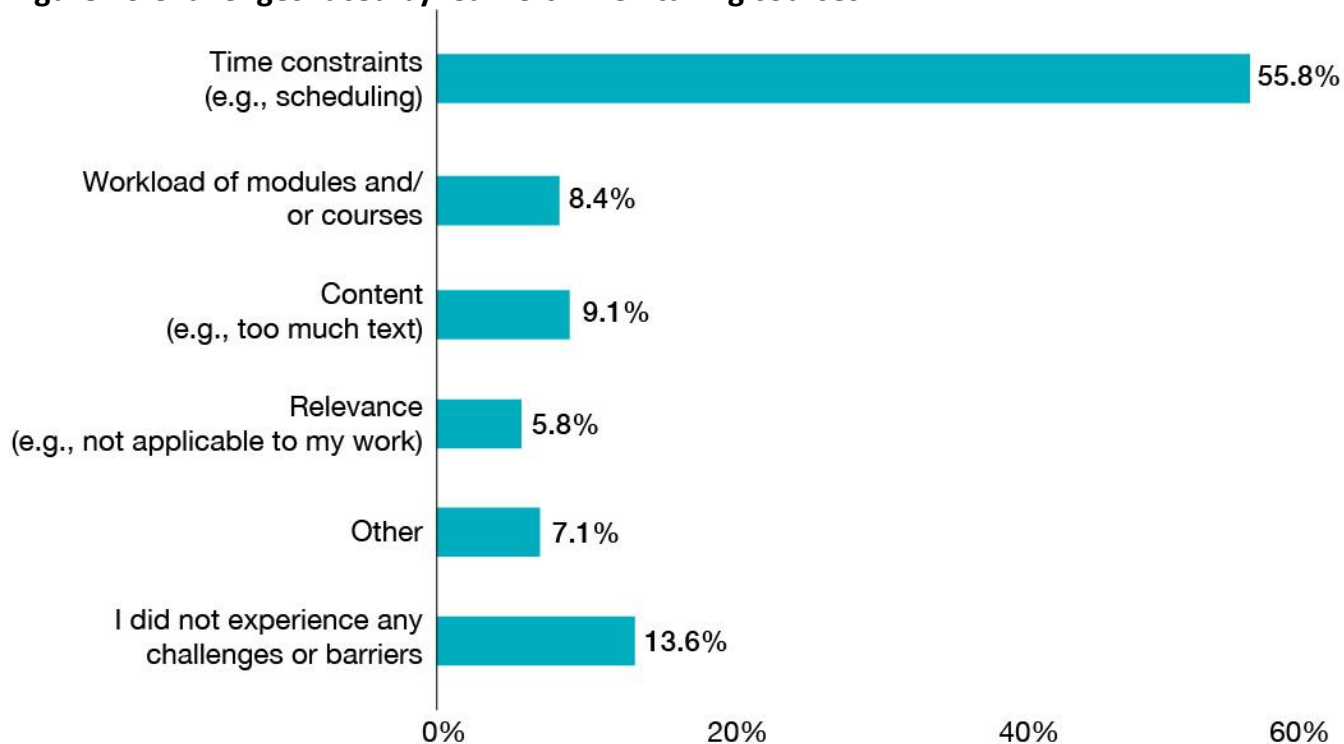
There was a clear pattern of attrition across the participation funnel, where large numbers of SMEs register and enrol in courses, but substantially fewer progress to active engagement and course completion, indicating a persistent gap between initial access and sustained participation. High levels of initial intent do not translate into sustained engagement, as 492 SMEs enrolled in more than 10 courses, but only 98 completed more than 10, suggesting that capacity constraints and competing priorities limit follow-through.

Completion is heavily concentrated at low levels of engagement, with most SMEs completing only one or two courses (210 completed one course and 112 completed two courses), while participation declines steadily beyond that point indicating that engagement is generally shallow rather than sustained. These patterns are consistent across regions, as seen in Ontario where participation declines from 1,656 SMEs registered to 1,066 enrolled in courses and 580 completing at least one course, reinforcing that attrition reflects broader structural challenges rather than regional differences. Smaller businesses account for the majority of participation (1,286 SMEs with 0–10 employees), but only 431 completed at least one course (~34%), indicating that while smaller SMEs are more likely to access training, they face similar constraints in sustaining engagement. Mid-sized SMEs (51–200 employees) demonstrate relatively higher completion rates (~44%), suggesting that slightly greater organizational capacity may support deeper and more sustained engagement with training.

Learner feedback further clarified the barriers affecting participation. Time constraints emerged as the primary obstacle, particularly for small business owners balancing multiple responsibilities. As one participant explained, “I’m basically working all the time, so even when something looks useful, it’s hard to actually sit down and commit the time to go through it properly.” Competing priorities similarly limited sustained engagement, with another participant noting, “You start it with good intentions, but then something comes up with the business, and it gets pushed aside, and it’s hard to come back to it.” These findings illustrate the gap between enrolment and completion, highlighting the structural realities faced by SMEs.

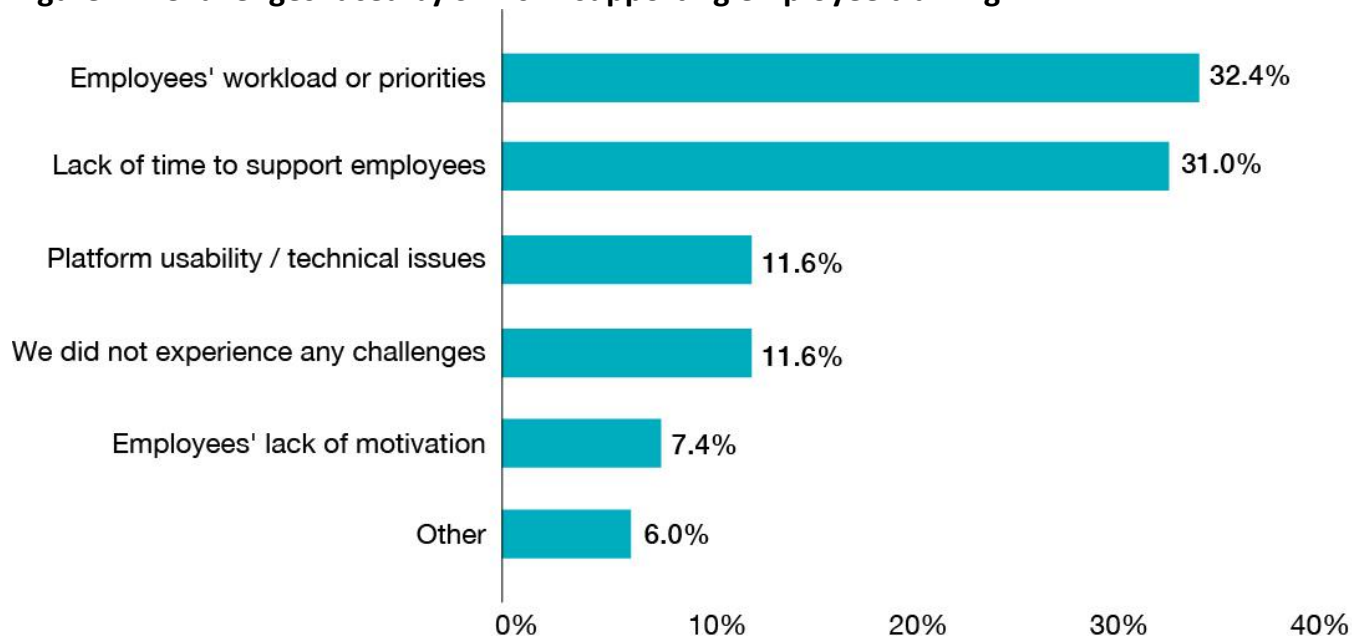
Roundtable discussions also revealed a need for clearer guidance in navigating the platform and selecting courses. While the course catalogue was perceived as comprehensive, some participants also described it as overwhelming, particularly when they were trying to determine which courses were most relevant to their organization’s needs. Participants suggested incorporating industry-specific recommendations, course-level indicators (e.g., introductory, intermediate, advanced), and clearer guidance on where to begin based on organizational priorities. SME leaders also expressed interest in practical advice and examples demonstrating how other organizations had successfully implemented training programs. As one participant explained, “One barrier for me was just feeling a little overwhelmed by all the options”, adding that “Having somewhere to start to filter down from all of the courses on offer would’ve been helpful.” These comments suggest opportunities to improve platform wayfinding, course recommendations, and the visibility of learning pathways. At the learner level, accessibility challenges were relatively limited but still noteworthy. Fewer than one in six learners reported experiencing barriers, and 94% found the interface user-friendly. Nonetheless, time constraints remained the dominant challenge, followed by issues related to workload, content length, and perceived relevance. These findings underscore that structural limitations, rather than technological barriers, were the primary impediments to participation (Figure 26).

Figure 26 Challenges faced by learners when taking courses



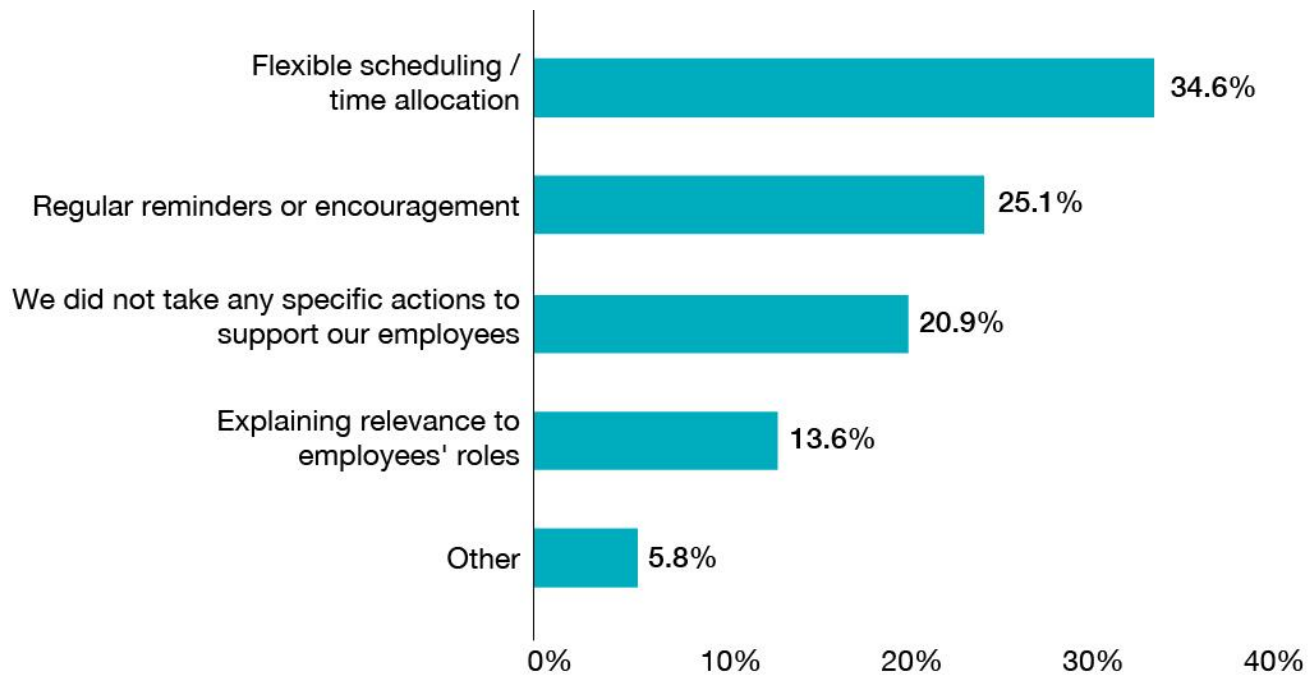
Organizational constraints further shaped SMEs' ability to support employee participation. The most significant challenges included employees' workload and competing priorities, as well as limited time to support training. Technical issues and platform usability concerns were reported less frequently but still affected some users. For example, one participant noted, "It wasn't always clear where to go or what to do next... I found myself clicking around trying to figure out how to get back to what I was working on." Others highlighted difficulties in assigning courses to staff, explaining that "Trying to assign courses to employees wasn't very straightforward... it took some time to figure out." These findings indicate that organizational capacity and clarity of platform navigation influenced engagement (Figure 27).

Figure 27. Challenges faced by SMEs in supporting employee training



Despite these barriers, SMEs adopted several strategies to support employee learning. The most common approaches included offering flexible scheduling and allocating time for training, followed by providing reminders and encouragement. Some organizations also reinforced participation by explaining the relevance of courses to employees' roles. However, a notable proportion of SMEs reported taking no specific actions to support completion, reflecting the constraints faced by smaller organizations. Roundtable participants emphasized the importance of structured guidance, streamlined course selection, and practical implementation strategies. Learners also expressed interest in certifications and digital badges that could be publicly shared on platforms such as LinkedIn, further enhancing motivation and recognition. These findings highlight both the supportive measures SMEs employed and opportunities to strengthen engagement (Figure 28).

Figure 28. SME support for employees taking training



Conclusions and Recommendations

The Beta phase marked a significant shift in Skills Bridge, shifting the project from a fragmented model using externally developed content toward a unified LMS with custom-developed and curated content tailored to the needs of SMEs. In doing so, the program addressed a key gap identified in the literature and the broader skills ecosystem: SMEs face persistent barriers to accessing relevant, affordable, and centralized training. The Beta findings demonstrate that a centralized, digitally delivered platform can reduce fragmentation, improve access, and provide a structured entry point into skills development for SMEs with limited time and internal capacity.

The program was successful in achieving and exceeding its core participation targets, engaging a large number of SMEs and learners across sectors and regions, including strong representation from equity-deserving groups. Learners reported high levels of satisfaction with course quality, relevance, and format, and demonstrated measurable gains in self-reported skills across multiple competency areas. These findings indicate that the platform is effective in delivering training that is perceived as useful, credible, and applicable to workplace contexts.

At the same time, the findings highlight an important distinction between initial access and sustained engagement. While many SMEs registered for the platform and enrolled in courses, substantially fewer progressed to consistent participation or completion. Engagement was often shallow, with most users completing only a small number of courses. This pattern suggests that while interest in training is high, sustained investment of time and attention remains constrained by the operational realities of SMEs, including limited capacity, competing priorities, and time scarcity.

Qualitative findings reinforce this interpretation. Participants consistently emphasized that training must be directly relevant, practical, and immediately applicable to justify continued engagement. They also highlighted the importance of reminders, follow-ups, and direct outreach, indicating that participation was not driven by platform access alone but required ongoing facilitation. Chambers of commerce and program staff played a critical role in this regard, acting as trusted intermediaries who supported recruitment, onboarding, and continued engagement.

From a strategic perspective, this evaluation also answers two questions. First, what approaches or tools are best suited to helping SME employers assess and recognize skills in the labour market, and under what conditions can their use either reduce or even eliminate skills mismatches? The findings suggest that Skills Bridge was most effective when it reduced complexity. The unified platform, single sign-on, and modular course design helped lower barriers to entry. However, SMEs also reported challenges related to navigating the platform, selecting appropriate courses, and identifying clear learning pathways aligned with their needs. The breadth of available content, while a strength, could also create decision fatigue without sufficient guidance or structure.

In terms of content alignment, the platform was broadly successful in addressing SME needs, particularly for foundational skills development and exposure to new topics. However, there was clear demand for more advanced, sector-specific, and implementation-focused content. Similarly, while EDI training improved awareness and understanding, evidence of deeper organizational change was more limited, suggesting that knowledge gains alone may not be sufficient to drive changes in workplace practices.

Another strategic question is: under what conditions do digital platforms for training, recruitment, and skills assessment and recognition lower SME cost and time barriers to investing in training and development? The findings in the evaluation suggest that the Beta phase successfully established the value and feasibility of a centralized training platform for SMEs but also clarified the conditions under which such a model is most effective. The evaluation highlights that the primary challenge is not awareness of skills gaps, but the set of structural and organizational barriers that limit SMEs' ability to invest in training in a sustained and meaningful way. Addressing these barriers will be critical to strengthening the long-term impact and scalability of the model.

Recommendations

The findings indicate that while SMEs demonstrated strong initial uptake, sustained engagement was more limited. Future program development should therefore prioritize a deeper understanding of the factors that constrain ongoing participation. This includes examining the role of time constraints, competing business priorities, and perceived return on investment, and identifying strategies that make training easier to integrate into day-to-day operations.

The effectiveness of training was closely tied to its practical relevance. Expanding the focus on applied, implementation-oriented learning will be critical. This includes developing more sector-specific content, incorporating real-world examples and case-based learning, and introducing more advanced offerings that support SMEs beyond foundational knowledge.

Participants also reported challenges navigating the platform and selecting appropriate content. Strengthening guidance and wayfinding features would improve usability and alignment with SME needs. Clearer learning pathways, recommended course sequences, and tools that help SMEs identify relevant training based on their business context would reduce decision fatigue and improve engagement.

Engagement patterns suggest that platform access alone is insufficient to sustain participation. High-touch engagement strategies should remain a core component of program delivery. Chambers of commerce and program staff play a critical role as trusted intermediaries, and structured follow-ups, targeted communications, and ongoing support will continue to be important in maintaining participation over time.

Variation in participation across firm size, sector, and capacity highlights the need for more tailored approaches. Future efforts should focus on better understanding which SMEs benefit most from the platform, where barriers are most pronounced, and how engagement strategies can be adapted to different business contexts.

While EDI training contributed to increased awareness and understanding, evidence of organizational change was more limited. Greater emphasis should be placed on integrating EDI into broader business practices. Embedding EDI concepts within operational, leadership, and HR-related content, alongside more applied guidance, may support stronger translation of knowledge into practice.

Finally, the Beta phase demonstrated the strengths and limitations of a centralized platform approach. Future development should focus on strengthening the conditions that support sustained SME investment in training over time. This includes refining platform design, expanding relevant content, and reinforcing delivery approaches that reduce barriers and increase the perceived value of training.

Although this evaluation translates key findings into actionable steps, important gaps remain in understanding the drivers of SME adoption of and sustained engagement with Skills Bridge and skills training overall. The next evaluation phase should focus on better understanding the barriers and enablers that influence whether SMEs move beyond initial access to sustained participation. This includes examining factors such as organizational capacity, competing priorities, perceived return on investment, and internal decision-making processes related to training. Building on existing research on SME training behaviour, addressing these questions will be critical to refining program design and delivery. Continued evaluation focused on these barriers and enablers will help strengthen uptake, improve sustained engagement, and ensure the model is responsive to the conditions under which SMEs are most likely to invest in training.

Appendix A: Skills Bridge Courses

Table A1. Skills Bridge courses

	Course Title	Date Developed	Date Available
1	Introduction to EDI	December 2023	December 2023
2	How to Create an Inclusive Organization (DAT App Introductory Course)	December 2023	December 2023
3	Increasing Diversity in Boards and Leadership	December 2023	December 2023
4	Understanding Bias, Microaggressions and How to Be an Ally	December 2023	December 2023
5	Inclusive Human Resources: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Talent for the 21st Century	December 2023	December 2023
6	Diversity and Inclusion Through the Value Chain	December 2023	January 2024
7	Diversity and Inclusion Through the Value Chain: Supplier Diversity	December 2023	December 2023
8	What gets Measured gets Done	December 2023	December 2023
9	Introduction à l'équité, la diversité et l'inclusion	March 2024	March 2024
10	Comment créer une organisation inclusive	March 2024	March 2024
11	Accroître la diversité dans les conseils d'administration et les instances dirigeantes	March 2024	March 2024
12	Compréhension des préjugés, des micro-agressions et comment être un allié	March 2024	March 2024
13	Ressources humaines inclusives: Attirer, développer et retenir les talents pour le 21e siècle	March 2024	March 2024
14	Diversité et inclusion dans la chaîne de valeur	March 2024	March 2024
15	Diversité et inclusion dans la chaîne de valeur: Diversité des fournisseurs	March 2024	March 2024
16	Ce qui est mesuré est fait	March 2024	March 2024
17	Green Skills: Business Case for Climate Action	November 2024	January 2025
18	Green Skills: How To Develop a Climate Strategy	November 2024	January 2025
19	Introduction to Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Canadian SMEs	November 2024	January 2025
20	Adopting responsible AI in the workplace: Reaping the benefits and managing the risks of AI	November 2024	January 2025
21	Compétences vertes: Enjeux commerciaux de l'action climatique	November 2024	January 2025
22	Compétences vertes: Comment développer une stratégie climatique	November 2024	January 2025
23	Introduction à l'intelligence artificielle (IA) pour les PME canadiennes	November 2024	January 2025
24	Tirer parti de l'IA pour les PME canadiennes: un guide pratique	November 2024	January 2025
25	An Introduction to Leadership [Part 1]	April 2023	June 2023
26	An Introduction to Leadership [Part 2]	April 2023	June 2023
27	An Introduction to Human Resources Management [Part 1]	April 2023	June 2023
28	An Introduction to Human Resources Management [Part 2]	April 2023	June 2023
29	An Introduction to Business Communication	April 2023	June 2023
30	How to Bring your Bricks and Mortar Business Online: An Introduction to e-Commerce	April 2023	June 2023

	Course Title	Date Developed	Date Available
31	How to Speak to Financial Managers without Being an Accountant	April 2023	June 2023
32	Building an Innovative Organization	April 2023	June 2023
33	Literacy and Basic Skills for Employees	April 2023	June 2023
34	Customer Service in Sales	April 2023	June 2023
35	Introduction au leadership - Partie 1	May 2023	June 2023
36	Introduction au leadership - Partie 2	May 2023	June 2023
37	Introduction à la gestion des ressources humaines - Partie 1	May 2023	June 2023
38	Introduction à la gestion des ressources humaines - Partie 2	May 2023	June 2023
39	Introduction à la communication d'affaires pour les dirigeants	May 2023	June 2023
40	Introduction au commerce électronique	May 2023	June 2023
41	Comment s'adresser à des gestionnaires financiers sans être comptable	May 2023	June 2023
42	Construire une entreprise innovante	May 2023	June 2023
43	Littératie et compétences de base pour les employés	May 2023	June 2023
44	Le service client dans les ventes	May 2023	June 2023
45	Presentation skills	March 2022	June 2023
46	Business Writing	March 2022	June 2023
47	Communication styles	March 2022	June 2023
48	Introduction to search engine optimization (SEO)	March 2022	June 2023
49	Quantitative Methods with Excel	March 2022	June 2023
50	Building resiliency and positive team connections	March 2022	June 2023
51	Creativity and problem solving	March 2022	June 2023
52	Introduction to Project Management	March 2022	June 2023
53	Introduction to Time Management	March 2022	June 2023
54	Les techniques de présentation	March 2022	June 2023
55	L'écriture professionnelle	March 2022	June 2023
56	Les styles de communication	March 2022	June 2023
57	Introduction à optimisation pour les moteurs de recherche (SEO)	March 2022	June 2023
58	Introduction à Microsoft Excel	March 2022	June 2023
59	Renforcer la résilience et établir une dynamique d'équipe positive	March 2022	June 2023
60	La créativité et les méthodes de résolution créative de problèmes	March 2022	June 2023
61	Introduction à la gestion de projet	March 2022	June 2023
62	Introduction à la gestion du temps	March 2022	June 2023
63	Introduction to Sales Fundamentals	March 2024	March 2024
64	Sales Fundamentals: The B2B sales process	March 2024	March 2024
65	Social Selling	March 2024	March 2024
66	Introduction to HTML	March 2024	March 2024
67	Introduction to CSS	March 2024	March 2024
68	Business Financials 01: Bookkeeping	March 2024	March 2024

	Course Title	Date Developed	Date Available
69	Business Financials 02: The Financial Statements	March 2024	March 2024
70	Introduction to UX Design	March 2024	March 2024
71	The UX Design Process	March 2024	March 2024
72	Design Thinking	March 2024	March 2024
73	Cyber Security Awareness: Part 01	March 2024	March 2024
74	Cyber Security Awareness: Part 02	March 2024	March 2024
75	Introduction to Social Media Marketing	March 2024	March 2024
76	Effective social media marketing techniques	March 2024	March 2024
77	Video Marketing for Small Businesses	March 2024	March 2024
78	Video Marketing Strategy: AI and Accessibility	March 2024	March 2024
79	Introduction aux Fondements de la Vente	March 2024	March 2024
80	Les Fondements de la Vente: Le Processus de Vente B2B	March 2024	March 2024
81	Les Fondements de la Vente: Vente sur les Réseaux Sociaux	March 2024	March 2024
82	Les fondamentaux de HTML	March 2024	March 2024
83	Les fondamentaux de CSS	March 2024	March 2024
84	Finances d'Entreprise 01: Tenue de Livres	March 2024	March 2024
85	Finances d'Entreprise 02: Les États Financiers	March 2024	March 2024
86	Les Fondamentaux de la Conception d'Expérience Utilisateur (UX)	March 2024	March 2024
87	Le Processus de Design d'Expérience Utilisateur (UX)	March 2024	March 2024
88	La Réflexion Conceptuelle	March 2024	March 2024
89	Sensibilisation à la Cyber Sécurité: Partie 01	March 2024	March 2024
90	Sensibilisation à la Cyber Sécurité: Partie 02	March 2024	March 2024
91	Initiation au Marketing sur les Réseaux Sociaux	March 2024	March 2024
92	Méthodes Gagnantes de Marketing sur les Réseaux Sociaux	March 2024	March 2024
93	Marketing Vidéo pour les Petites Entreprises	March 2024	March 2024
94	Stratégie de Marketing Vidéo: Intelligence Artificielle et Accessibilité	March 2024	March 2024
95	Votre guide essentiel sur l'IA générative: Un Bootcamp de 60 minutes	December 2024	December 2024
96	Your Essential Guide to Generative AI: A 60 Minute Bootcamp	December 2024	December 2024
97	Risk Management for Small Business	December 2024	March 2025
98	Hybrid Workplaces for Small Business (Change Management)	December 2024	March 2025
99	Introduction to Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)	December 2024	March 2025
100	Advanced Literacy Skills for Employees: Written Communication	December 2024	March 2025
101	Advanced Literacy Skills for Employees: Oral Communication	December 2024	March 2025
102	Mental Health in the Workplace	December 2024	March 2025
103	Advanced Customer Service	January 2025	March 2025
104	Managing People	January 2025	March 2025
105	Entrepreneurship 101	January 2025	March 2025
106	Gestion des risques pour les petites entreprises	December 2024	March 2025

	Course Title	Date Developed	Date Available
107	Milieux de travail hybrides pour petites entreprises (Gestion du changement)	December 2024	March 2025
108	Introduction à la Loi sur l'accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées de l'Ontario	December 2024	March 2025
109	La santé mentale au travail	December 2024	March 2025
110	Chamber Governance Refresher: Duties, Ethics and Leadership	February 2025	April 2025
111	Modern Chamber Governance Methods: Structures, Strategy and By-law Compliance	February 2025	May 2026
112	Workplace Violence & Harassment Awareness	3rd Party	May 2025
113	Supervisor Responsibilities & Due Diligence Refresher	3rd Party	May 2025
114	Naloxone Awareness	3rd Party	May 2025
115	Health & Safety Awareness Training (OHSA) - Ontario Supervisors	3rd Party	May 2025
116	Health & Safety Awareness Training (OHSA) - Ontario Workers	3rd Party	May 2025
117	Workplace Mental Health: Raising Awareness	3rd Party	May 2025
118	Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD) Prevention Awareness	3rd Party	May 2025
119	Understanding Risk and Legal Obligations for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion	December 2025	May 2026
120	Practical AI for SMEs: Hands-On Applications to Drive Productivity	January 2026	May 2026
121	Respectful Partnerships with Indigenous Businesses	January 2026	June 2026
122	International Market Expansion for SMES	January 2026	May 2026

Appendix B: Skills Bridge Learning Pathways

Table B1. Skills Bridge English learning pathways

ENGLISH	
Learning Path Name	Course Name
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion for Leaders	Introduction to EDI
	How to Create an Inclusive Organization
	Increasing Diversity in Boards and Leadership
	Understanding Bias, Microaggressions and how to be an Ally
	Inclusive Human Resources: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Talent for the 21st Century
	Diversity and Inclusion Through the Value Chain
	Diversity and Inclusion Through the Value Chain: Supplier Diversity
	What gets Measured gets Done
	Understanding Risk and Legal Obligations for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
	Introduction to Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion for Employees	Introduction to EDI
	How to Create an Inclusive Organization
	Understanding Bias, Microaggressions and how to be an Ally
	Introduction to Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
Management and Supervisory Skills	Introduction to Leadership Part 1
	Introduction to Leadership Part 2
	How to Create an Inclusive Organization
	Introduction to Human Resources Management - Part 1
	Introduction to Human Resources Management - Part 2
	Managing People
	Building Resiliency and Positive Team Connections
	Hybrid Workplaces for Small Businesses (Change Management)
	Mental Health in the Workplace
	Understanding Risk and Legal Obligations for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
Digital Skills Basics	Introduction to UX Design
	Introduction to CSS
	Introduction to HTML
	Cyber Security Awareness: Part 01

ENGLISH	
Learning Path Name	Course Name
	Cyber Security Awareness: Part 02
	Practical AI for SMEs: Hands-On Applications to Drive Productivity
Sales and Marketing	Introduction to Sales Fundamentals
	Social Selling
	Sales Fundamentals: The B2B Sales Process
	Introduction to Social Media Marketing
	Effective Social Media Marketing Techniques
	Video Marketing for Small Businesses
	Video Marketing Strategy: AI and Accessibility
	Introduction to Search Engine Optimization (SEO & Google Analytics)
	Customer Service in Sales
Finance and Accounting	How to Speak to Financial Managers without Being an Accountant
	Quantitative Methods with Excel
	Business Financials 01: Bookkeeping
	Business Financials 02: Financial Statements
	Risk Management for Small Business
	Entrepreneurship 101
Adaptability	Creativity and Problem Solving
	Building Resiliency and Positive Team Connections
	Time Management
	Project Management
	How to Create an Inclusive Organization
	Hybrid Workplaces for Small Businesses (Change Management)
	Green Skills: Business Case for Climate Action
	Green Skills: How To Develop a Climate Strategy
Communication	Communication Styles
	Presentation Skills
	Understanding Bias, Microaggressions and how to be an Ally
	Advanced Customer Service
	Advanced Literacy Skills for Employees: Oral Communication
Writing	Literacy and Basic Skills for Employees
	Business Writing
	Advanced Literacy Skills for Employees: Written Communication
	Advanced Literacy Skills for Employees: Oral Communication

ENGLISH	
Learning Path Name	Course Name
Collaboration	Introduction to Business Communication for Leaders
	Building Resiliency and Positive Team Connections
	Communication Styles
	Creativity and Problem Solving
	Diversity and Inclusion Through the Value Chain: Supplier Diversity
	Introduction to Business Communication for Leaders
Creativity and Innovation	Creativity and problem solving
	Entrepreneurship 101
	Building an Innovative Business
	Design Thinking
	Green Skills: Business Case for Climate Action
	Green Skills: How To Develop a Climate Strategy
	Diversity and Inclusion Through the Value Chain
	Diversity and Inclusion Through the Value Chain: Supplier Diversity
Sales Fundamentals	Introduction to E-Commerce
	Introduction to Sales Fundamentals
	Sales Fundamentals: The B2B Sales Process
	Social Selling
	Customer Service in Sales
	Advanced Customer Service
Business Essentials (SME Essentials)	Introduction to EDI
	Building an Innovative Business
	Entrepreneurship 101
	How to Speak to Financial Managers without Being an Accountant
	Introduction to E-Commerce
	Risk Management for Small Business
	Introduction to Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Canadian SMEs
	Introduction to Sales Fundamentals
	Introduction to Social Media Marketing
	Introduction to Search Engine Optimization (SEO & Google Analytics)
	Customer Service in Sales
	Advanced Customer Service
Artificial Intelligence for All	Introduction to Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Canadian SMEs
	Leveraging AI for Canadian SMEs: A Practical Guide (removed in May 2025)

ENGLISH	
Learning Path Name	Course Name
	Adopting responsible AI in the workplace: Reaping the benefits and managing the risks of AI (added in May 2025 to replace "Leveraging AI")
	Your Essential Guide to Generative AI: A 60 Minute Bootcamp (removed Dec. 3, 2025)
	Video Marketing Strategy: AI and Accessibility
	Practical AI for SMEs: Hands-On Applications to Drive Productivity
Human Resources	Introduction to Human Resources Management - Part 1
	Introduction to Human Resources Management - Part 2
	Inclusive Human Resources: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Talent for the 21st Century
	Managing People
	Understanding Bias, Microaggressions and how to be an Ally
	Introduction to Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA)
	Understanding Risk and Legal Obligations for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
Social Media	Video Marketing Strategy: AI and Accessibility
	Video Marketing for Small Businesses
	Effective Social Media Marketing Techniques
	Introduction to Search Engine Optimization (SEO & Google Analytics)
	Introduction to Social Media Marketing
	Introduction to E-Commerce
Cybersecurity	Cyber Security Awareness: Part 01
	Cyber Security Awareness: Part 02
Governance (Ontario)	Chamber Governance Refresher: Duties, Ethics and Leadership
	Modern Chamber Governance Methods: Structures, Strategy and By-law Compliance
Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT)	Introduction to Search Engine Optimization (SEO & Google Analytics)
	Quantitative Methods with Excel
	Project Management
	Time Management
	Business Writing
	Building Resiliency and Positive Team Connections
	Creativity and Problem Solving
	Presentation Skills
	Communication Styles
	Sales Fundamentals: The B2B Sales Process
	Social Selling

ENGLISH	
Learning Path Name	Course Name
	Introduction to HTML
	Introduction to CSS
	Business Financials 01: Bookkeeping
	Business Financials 02: Financial Statements
	Introduction to UX Design
	The UX Design Process
	Design Thinking
	Cyber Security Awareness: Part 01
	Cyber Security Awareness: Part 02
	Introduction to Social Media Marketing
	Effective Social Media Marketing Techniques
	Video Marketing for Small Businesses
	Video Marketing Strategy: AI and Accessibility
	Introduction to Sales Fundamentals
Workplace Safety	Workplace Violence & Harassment Awareness
	Supervisor Responsibilities & Due Diligence Refresher
	Naloxone Awareness
	Health & Safety Awareness Training (OHSA) - Ontario Supervisors
	Health & Safety Awareness Training (OHSA) - Ontario Workers
	Workplace Mental Health: Raising Awareness
	Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSD) Prevention Awareness
Indigenous Business Partnerships	Respectful Partnerships with Indigenous Businesses
Growing Your Business Internationally	International Market Expansion for SMES

Table B2. Skills Bridge French learning pathways

FRENCH	
Learning Path Name	Course Name
Équité, Diversité et Inclusion pour les leaders	Introduction à l'EDI
	Comment créer une organisation inclusive
	Accroître la diversité dans les conseils d'administration et les instances dirigeantes
	Comprendre les préjugés, les micro-agressions et comment être un allié
	Ressources humaines inclusives : Attirer, développer et retenir les talents pour le 21ème siècle
	Diversité et inclusion à travers la chaîne de valeur

FRENCH	
Learning Path Name	Course Name
	Diversité et inclusion à travers la chaîne de valeur : Diversité des fournisseurs
	Ce qui est mesuré est fait
	Introduction à la Loi sur l'accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées de l'Ontario
Équité, diversité et inclusion pour les salariés	Introduction à l'EDI
	Comment créer une organisation inclusive
	Comprendre les préjugés, les micro-agressions et comment être un allié
	Introduction à la Loi sur l'accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées de l'Ontario
Compétences en matière de gestion et de supervision	Introduction au leadership - Partie 1
	Introduction au leadership - Partie 2
	Comment créer une organisation inclusive
	Introduction à la gestion des ressources humaines - Partie 1
	Introduction à la gestion des ressources humaines - Partie 2
	Renforcer la résilience et établir une dynamique d'équipe positive
	Milieus de travail hybrides pour petites entreprises (Gestion du changement)
	La santé mentale au travail
Compétences numériques de base	Les Fondamentaux de la Conception d'Expérience Utilisateur (UX)
	Les fondamentaux de CSS
	Les fondamentaux de HTML
	Sensibilisation à la Cyber Sécurité - Partie 01
	Sensibilisation à la Cyber Sécurité - Partie 02
Vente et marketing	Introduction aux Fondements de la Ventes
	Les Fondements de la Vente: Vente sur les Réseaux Sociaux
	Les Fondements de la Vente: Le Processus de Vente B2B
	Initiation au Marketing sur les Réseaux Sociaux
	Méthodes Gagnantes de Marketing sur les Réseaux Sociaux
	Marketing Vidéo pour les Petites Entreprises
	Stratégie de Marketing Vidéo: Intelligence Artificielle et Accessibilité
	Introduction à l'optimisation pour les moteurs de recherche (SEO)
	Le service client dans les ventes
Finance et comptabilité	Comment s'adresser à des gestionnaires financiers sans être comptable

FRENCH	
Learning Path Name	Course Name
	Introduction à Microsoft Excel
	Finances d'Entreprise 01 : Tenue de Livres
	Finances d'Entreprise 02 : Les États Financiers
	Gestion des risques pour les petites entreprises
Adaptabilité	La créativité et les méthodes de résolution créative de problèmes
	Renforcer la résilience et établir une dynamique d'équipe positive
	Introduction à la gestion du temps
	Introduction à la gestion de projet
	Comment créer une organisation inclusive
	Milieus de travail hybrides pour petites entreprises (Gestion du changement)
	Compétences vertes : Enjeux commerciaux de l'action climatique
	Compétences vertes : Comment développer une stratégie climatique
Communication	Les styles de communication
	Les techniques de présentation
	Comprendre les préjugés, les micro-agressions et comment être un allié
Rédaction	Littératie et compétences de base pour les employés
	L'écriture professionnelle
	Introduction à la communication d'affaires pour les dirigeants
Collaboration	Renforcer la résilience et établir une dynamique d'équipe positive
	Les styles de communication
	La créativité et les méthodes de résolution créative de problèmes
	Diversité et inclusion à travers la chaîne de valeur : Diversité des fournisseurs
	Introduction à la communication d'affaires pour les dirigeants
Créativité et innovation	La créativité et les méthodes de résolution créative de problèmes
	Construire une entreprise innovante
	La Réflexion Conceptuelle
	Compétences vertes : Enjeux commerciaux de l'action climatique
	Compétences vertes : Comment développer une stratégie climatique

FRENCH	
Learning Path Name	Course Name
	Diversité et inclusion à travers la chaîne de valeur
	Diversité et inclusion à travers la chaîne de valeur : Diversité des fournisseurs
Principes fondamentaux de la vente	Introduction au commerce électronique
	Introduction aux Fondements de la Ventes
	Les Fondements de la Vente: Vente sur les Réseaux Sociaux
	Les Fondements de la Vente: Le Processus de Vente B2B
	Le service client dans les ventes
L'essentiel de l'entreprise	Introduction à l'EDI
	Construire une entreprise innovante
	Comment s'adresser à des gestionnaires financiers sans être comptable
	Introduction au commerce électronique
	Gestion des risques pour les petites entreprises
	Introduction à l'intelligence artificielle (IA) pour les PME canadiennes
	Introduction aux Fondements de la Vente
	Initiation au Marketing sur les Réseaux Sociaux
	Introduction à l'optimisation pour les moteurs de recherche (SEO)
	Le service client dans les ventes
L'intelligence artificielle pour tous	Introduction à l'intelligence artificielle (IA) pour les PME canadiennes
	Tirer parti de l'IA pour les PME canadiennes : Un guide pratique
	Votre guide essentiel sur l'IA générative: Un Bootcamp de 60 minutes
	Stratégie de Marketing Vidéo: Intelligence Artificielle et Accessibilité
Ressources humaines	Introduction à la gestion des ressources humaines - Partie 1
	Introduction à la gestion des ressources humaines - Partie 2
	Ressources humaines inclusives : Attirer, développer et retenir les talents pour le 21ème siècle
	Comprendre les préjugés, les micro-agressions et comment être un allié
	Introduction à la Loi sur l'accessibilité pour les personnes handicapées de l'Ontario
Réseaux sociaux	Stratégie de Marketing Vidéo: Intelligence Artificielle et Accessibilité
	Marketing Vidéo pour les Petites Entreprises

FRENCH	
Learning Path Name	Course Name
	Méthodes Gagnantes de Marketing sur les Réseaux Sociaux
	Introduction à l'optimisation pour les moteurs de recherche (SEO)
	Initiation au Marketing sur les Réseaux Sociaux
	Introduction au commerce électronique
Cyber sécurité	Sensibilisation à la Cyber Sécurité - Partie 01
	Sensibilisation à la Cyber Sécurité - Partie 02
Formation en compétences numériques et professionnelles de pointe	La créativité et les méthodes de résolution créative de problèmes
	Introduction à la gestion du temps
	Introduction à la gestion de projet
	Renforcer la résilience et établir une dynamique d'équipe positive
	Introduction à Microsoft Excel
	Introduction à l'optimisation pour les moteurs de recherche (SEO)
	L'écriture professionnelle
	Les styles de communication
	Les techniques de présentation
	Les Fondements de la Vente: Le Processus de Vente B2B
	Les Fondements de la Vente: Vente sur les Réseaux Sociaux
	Les fondamentaux de CSS
	Les fondamentaux de HTML
	Finances d'Entreprise 01 : Tenue de Livres
	Finances d'Entreprise 02 : Les États Financiers
	Les Fondamentaux de la Conception d'Expérience Utilisateur (UX)
	Le Processus de Design d'Expérience Utilisateur (UX)
	La Réflexion Conceptuelle
	Sensibilisation à la Cyber Sécurité - Partie 01
	Sensibilisation à la Cyber Sécurité - Partie 02
	Initiation au Marketing sur les Réseaux Sociaux
	Méthodes Gagnantes de Marketing sur les Réseaux Sociaux
	Marketing Vidéo pour les Petites Entreprises
	Stratégie de Marketing Vidéo: Intelligence Artificielle et Accessibilité
	Introduction aux Fondements de la Vente

Appendix C: Webinars

Webinars hosted by OCC and DI as part of Skills Bridge are also shared with Skills Bridge users and webinar attendees via a YouTube playlist.⁵⁴ Topics covered between June 2023, and January 2026 included:

1. Land Acknowledgements: More Than Just Ticking a Box - June 13, 2024

In this webinar, we will explore how to create and deliver land acknowledgements with meaning, authenticity, and intention.

2. Embedding DEI Into Workforce Development - July 11, 2024

In this webinar, we will explore how Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) can be pillars to a productive and profitable organization. The session explores how DEI can be a competitive advantage.

3. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy - July 23, 2024

In this webinar, we will explore the importance of embedding equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) into your business strategy, and ways you can improve and track your organization's progress in implementing EDI best practices. This session will address the state of EDI in small and medium-sized enterprises in Canada, the six dimensions to consider in your EDI strategy and resources like the Diversity Assessment Tool.

4. Working Caregivers: Creating a Baseline Understanding - August 1, 2024

In this webinar, we will explore promising practices and strategies for shifting organizational culture to support employees, which could reduce absenteeism, sick days, and unforeseen departures. This session aims to help build a resilient and sustainable workforce and share available services and supports for working caregivers and their employers.

5. Disability Inclusion IS a Business Imperative - August 22, 2024

In this webinar, we will explore the central reasons that make disability inclusion in the workplace a key to growth and prosperity for your business. This session will address how disability inclusion drives innovation, enhances company culture, and expands market reach.

6. AI: Understanding the Impact and Risks - December 10, 2024

In this webinar, we will explore the impact, risks, and opportunities associated with using AI. This session will address: the current state of AI and where it is headed; what businesses should do to address the AI knowledge gap; what and where to find free and accessible AI tools and resources for SMEs; and how businesses can adopt and utilize AI to foster a more competitive and productive workplace and economy.

7. Supporting Employees with Disabilities & Building Stronger Workplaces - June 5, 2025

In this webinar we will define the decision-making process that workers undertake when considering whether to share personal health information with others in the workplace, review a new resource that assists workers in deciding whether to communicate their support and accommodation needs,

and identify workplace support ideas and strategies to assist workers living with chronic and episodic health conditions.

8. Strategies for Promoting Mental Wellness in the Workplace - July 24, 2025

In this webinar, we will provide individuals with an overview of the different aspects of holistic personal health that contribute to workplace wellness. Participants will learn ways to identify what they need and constructive actions that can be used for regular self-care, identify the eight dimensions of wellness, and their individual needs and actions, that will help improve their well-being at work, and list some coping strategies to maintain or improve wellness.

9. Developing an Equitable Engagement Strategy - August 21, 2025

In this webinar, we will provide an overview of how organizations and businesses can develop engagement strategies that are reflective and responsive to diverse community needs. Participants will explore why meaningful engagement is critical to building trust, improving service outcomes, and fostering inclusive environments that reflect the lived realities of the communities they serve. The session will highlight best practices and case studies rooted in social justice education, 2SLGBTQ+ inclusion, and equity-based placemaking, demonstrating how inclusive engagement can lead to more innovative, strategic, and sustainable organizational impact.

10. Inclusive Hiring Practices: Pathways to Employment for Immigrants - October 16, 2025

In this webinar, we will explore employment barriers faced by immigrants, and opportunities for SMEs to adopt more inclusive hiring practices. This session will highlight Canada's changing demographics, Newcomers' experiences of discrimination, unemployment and underemployment, SME perspectives on hiring immigrants, advice for managing the current backlash to EDI, and provide Tools and initiatives to support SMEs to adopt more inclusive hiring practices.

11. Building AI Capacity: Overcoming Barriers to Address SME Skills Shortages - November 13, 2025

In this webinar, we will explore the challenges small and medium-sized businesses face to build their AI capacity and the opportunities available to them to overcome these challenges. This session will address AI transformation in Canada, challenges faced by SMEs to build their AI capacity, responsible and ethical AI adoption, and look at tools and initiatives to support SMEs to enhance their AI capacity and adoption.

12. Responsible AI and Avoiding Bias - December 17, 2025

In this webinar, we will explore how SMEs can integrate AI in ways that reduce bias, advance equity, and strengthen organizational performance. Key areas of discussion will include: the risks of bias, misinformation, and inequitable outcomes in AI systems and how they uniquely affect SMEs; principles of responsible and ethical AI adoption from an EDI perspective; tools, frameworks, and supports that help SMEs implement safer and more transparent AI practices; practical use cases for AI that enhance productivity without compromising fairness or compliance; and tips to make informed decisions about AI integration, workforce upskilling, and organizational readiness.

13. From Buzzword to Bottom Line: AI for Small Business - December 18, 2025

In this webinar, discover how to save time, work smarter and create new paths to growth with tools and strategies tailored for businesses. Participants will learn a practical framework that helps businesses unlock AI's real value, covering the three levers of AI growth and how they apply to your

business today, how to use AI safely with simple guardrails to protect your business, a fast way to spot your AI-ready tasks with a fast “friction finder”, and moving from tools to teammates; get AI working better and harder for your business and role.

14. Lunch and Learn with Louie: All About the AODA - January 29, 2026

In this webinar, we will look at an overview of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), how to engage and support employees who have disabilities, what the AODA requires for your business, and the different types of disabilities.

15. Finding Opportunities Amid Trade Turmoil - January 29, 2026

In this webinar, we will break down Canada’s trade landscape with Desjardins. Looking at Canada’s current trade position and industry outlook, how SMEs are adapting to trade turmoil, trade opportunities for Canadian SMEs, and which industries stand to gain from expanded trade with Europe.

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