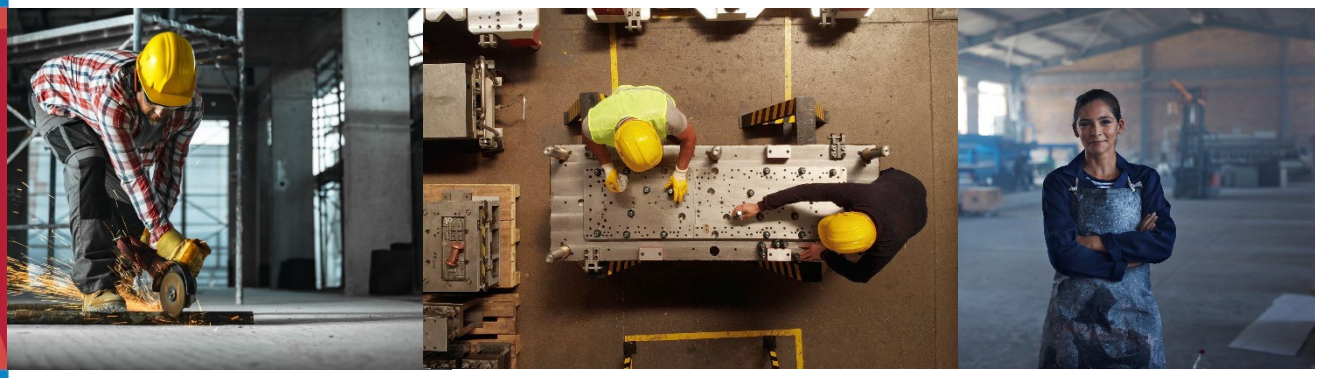
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# The Pan-Canadian Virtual Recruitment and Training System for Canada's Unionized Construction Sector

## Final Report

**April 2026**

This report was produced as part of a project funded by the Future Skills Centre (FSC), with financial support from the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.

FSC is a forward-thinking centre for research and collaboration dedicated to preparing Canadians for employment success. We believe Canadians should feel confident about the skills they have to succeed in a changing workforce. As a pan-Canadian community, we are collaborating to rigorously identify, test, measure, and share innovative approaches to assessing and developing the skills Canadians need to thrive in the days and years ahead. The Future Skills Centre was founded by a consortium whose members are Toronto Metropolitan University, Blueprint ADE, and Signal49 Research.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Pan-Canadian Virtual Recruitment and Training System project has expanded access to skilled-trades information, training resources, and personalized support for individuals exploring or entering the unionized construction trades. Through two national digital campaigns, the project generated more than 11 million ad impressions, nearly 400,000 clicks, and over 281,000 unique website visits, with paid advertising driving 73 per cent of regional site traffic. More than 7,100 individuals recruited through Virtual Recruitment channels registered on the Build Your Skills Learning Hub during this phase of the project, most of whom were early-stage explorers or pre-apprentices. Although Virtual Recruitment users logged in at lower rates than users from other channels—driven largely by low uptake in Québec—those who did log in engaged meaningfully with course content, particularly math, assessment preparation, and trade-specific science.

Along with online resources, apprenticeship liaisons provided a new layer of personalized support in this phase of the project. Roughly 1,600 users received outreach and one-fifth responded, demonstrating early evidence of demand for individualized guidance. Survey findings showed that 69 per cent were satisfied or very satisfied with the support they received. Overall, user outcomes were strongly tied to initial goals at intake; that is, those seeking jobs took more concrete steps and were more likely to secure employment, while explorers tended to remain in information-gathering stages. The outcome survey showed that close to three in ten users looking for employment support secured jobs. Overall, the project found that digital recruitment, accessible learning tools, and personalized support can work together to strengthen pathways into the skilled trades and help individuals navigate training and employment transitions.

# KEY INSIGHTS

- *What interventions are most effective in smoothing job transitions for people currently out of the labour market or those in precarious employment?* Blending digital tools with personalized guidance can support transitions into training, apprenticeships, and employment. Career guidance for the unionized construction trades must adapt to local labour-market conditions and user readiness.
- *What interventions are the most effective in addressing the diverse needs of workers who have been out of the labour market for varying lengths of time?* As user intent shapes outcomes, interventions must be tailored to needs and goals. Explorers benefited from low-barrier information resources, while job-seekers and pre-apprentices gained more from structured actions, coaching, and direct connections to skills-development resources, training, unions, and employers.

- *What are the key ingredients to helping individuals successfully transition to new employment opportunities or keep up with the evolving skills requirements of their jobs?*
  Users who entered the system with the intention of finding a job reported higher levels of completing job-related activities, as well as higher rates of securing employment. While explorers reported lower levels of outreach, training, and job-related actions, this level of engagement could suggest they were satisfied with gathering information and learning about the construction trades without taking further steps.

# THE ISSUE

Canada's construction sector is suffering a growing labour shortage, a looming retirement wave, and a critical need for skilled workers. Although careers in the skilled trades offer high labour demand, competitive salaries, and job satisfaction, attracting sufficient new entrants to keep pace with demand remains a challenge. Many prospective candidates experience barriers that prevent their access to existing training and supports, despite government investments to facilitate workers' entry into the skilled trades. A key strategy for the industry involves strengthening initiatives to attract and support workers, including individuals from underrepresented groups—particularly women, Indigenous Peoples, youth, and newcomers—in attaining entry into and successful careers in construction.

Traditional channels for recruitment and upskilling/reskilling the workforce may no longer be effective in meeting multiple future-of-work challenges, including workers' ability to adapt to labour market changes, unmet labour demands, and worker mobility. Additionally, a challenge specific to the skilled trades is the complex and fragmented apprenticeship landscape across 13 different provincial/territorial systems. This complex system results in a multi-layered hierarchy of information, requirements, and regulations that apprentices must navigate to enter and proceed through the trades. Prospective apprentices are responsible for making sponsorship arrangements with an employer or union during their apprenticeship, obtaining admission into a training program, and maintaining registration with both the employer and the training institution throughout the process.

Taken together, these pressures reveal a dual challenge: individuals trying to enter the trades face a maze of practical, financial, and informational barriers, while the broader apprenticeship and training system remains fragmented, difficult to navigate, and slow to adapt to evolving labour demands. Without more coordinated pathways, clearer supports, and modernized recruitment and training approaches, both prospective tradespeople and employers can struggle to keep pace with the needs of the construction trades sector. Addressing these intertwined individual and system-level obstacles is essential for building an inclusive and future-ready skilled trades workforce.

# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The goal of the Pan-Canadian Virtual Recruitment and Training System is to improve recruitment pathways and skills development for individuals exploring the construction trades and those who are interested in and ready to begin skills training, apprenticeships, and union employment. The VRIV project leveraged best practices, assets, and resources from previous VR projects (VRI, VRII, VRIII) to engage various audiences, including:

- **Expanding and adapting marketing and social media assets to strengthen targeted recruitment**. These updated materials helped draw prospective candidates toward Provincial Building Trade Councils' Construction Trades Hub sites tailored to their local context.

- **Directing online users to Provincial Building Trade Councils' Construction Trades Hub sites for localized information and engagement**. Visitors could explore unionized trades in their province and sign up to receive guidance on pathways into the unionized construction trades through a "Connect to Unions" form.[1]

- **Promoting sign-ups for the Build Your Skills (BYS) Learning Hub to deepen trades exploration and skill development**. The BYS Learning Hub offers assessments, training resources, and learning tools that help individuals understand different trades, evaluate their readiness, and build required skills for the construction trades.

- **Providing an integrated system of online resources to support informed entry into the skilled trades**. Together, the Provincial Building Trade Councils' Construction Trades Hub sites and BYS Learning Hub help users learn about trade options and prepare for pre-apprenticeship training, apprenticeship, and union membership.

- **Creating accessible resources for underrepresented individuals to explore and pursue trades careers**. This online ecosystem can reduce barriers for groups under-represented in the trades (such as women, Indigenous Peoples, youth, and newcomers) by offering flexible, self-paced information and supports, which may be especially needed if they are just beginning to learn about the skilled trades system in their region and do not have networks of support.

Along with using previously created resources, VRIV added additional resources to support online users. Along with website updates and the addition of learning resources, new users who joined in 2025 could access personalized support to navigate and enter the skilled trades system. Working in partnership with Canada's Building Trades Unions (CBTU) and local building trade unions across Canada and their employers/contractors, participants could sign up to receive individual support from 'apprenticeship liaisons' who would help provide personalized guidance

[1] This feature is available on all Provincial Building Trade Councils' Construction Trades Hub sites (other than Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia). On this form, users are asked to provide their name, email, and phone number if they are interested in learning more about available unionized construction job opportunities or apprenticeship training. In the BYS Learning Hub intake form, users can also check a box if they are interested in "connecting to available construction job opportunities with a local union" or "receiving information about getting into an apprenticeship at a union training school." Both sign-up forms were used in 2025 to gather contact information from individuals who expressed interest in receiving additional guidance, enabling the apprenticeship liaison to follow up with tailored outreach and support.

in connecting to union employment and/or training. CBTU, collaborating with project partners, also conducted a targeted needs analysis consisting of an environmental scan of the most common recruitment requirements for unions, which was used to develop recruitment procedures, ensure referrals contained up-to-date information, and create an administrative data collection tool (i.e., Project Management Information System).

In the most recent iteration of the project logic model (see Appendix A), the Inputs and Activities now include administrative and evaluation tools used by partners, as well as project activities that support partners in using these tools. For example, unlike previous phases, partners led the needs analysis in collaboration with unions and training centres. This phase also introduced new Outputs related to administering a follow-up survey and tracking user outcomes. However, the Outputs associated with advertising, regional sites, and the BYS Learning Hub remained largely consistent across Virtual Recruitment phases, as users continued to move through the same online navigation pathway.

Finally, the overall project-level outcomes in this phase of the project remained unchanged in the logic model. The project assumed that engaging with Virtual Recruitment content tailored to the unionized construction trades would, in the short and medium term, increase users' awareness of trades and apprenticeship opportunities. The suite of online resources was also expected to help individuals better understand their existing skill levels and identify which trades might be a good fit. By interacting with learning materials, users could build both their knowledge and confidence as they considered next steps toward a trades career. More broadly, the project aimed to strengthen the capacity of unions and training centres to connect with and recruit individuals online, with a particular focus on underrepresented groups. Over the longer term, anticipated outcomes include: growth in the number of individuals—especially those from underrepresented communities—entering or engaging with unionized employment or training pathways; and an increase in sector-wide understanding of the factors that support the successful recruitment of underrepresented individuals into construction trades unions.

# EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

Throughout all phases of the project, SRDC conducted a mixed-methods evaluation, partnering with SkillPlan, CBTU, and Provincial Building Trades Councils to develop and implement data collection. In this phase of the project, the data collection consisted of ongoing analysis of social media campaign results and activity across Provincial Building Trade Councils' Construction Trades Hub sites and the BYS Learning Hub. SRDC also implemented an enhanced outcome survey for individuals seeking to connect with a union or training opportunities to track longer term outcome data. The project continued to gather responses from the ongoing BYS Learning Hub intake survey among individuals accessing these online resources. Finally, SRDC gathered

information from CBTU's apprenticeship liaisons and the Program Management Information System (PMIS) they used to track their outreach and contact with participants.

Building on previous evaluations, this phase focused on the following key questions.

1. Were the social media and advertising campaigns effective in increasing awareness of unionized trades opportunities and driving traffic to Virtual Recruitment resources?
2. What is the profile of participants who use the Build Your Skills Learning Hub?
    a. What is the profile of participants who express an interest in connecting to a union or training?
    b. How close are participants to being ready to participate in trades training and/or employment?
3. What were the key supports offered? How did users engage with the supports?
    a. How effective were Learning Hub resources for Virtual Recruitment users in supporting users' perceived knowledge and skill gains?
4. After using Virtual Recruitment supports, to what extent did participants take steps towards employment and training in the skilled trades sector, such as contacting a union, completing a union application, applying for training programs, completing exam preparation, or initiating self-directed trades-related learning?
    a. To what extent did the new and existing resources support the recruitment aims of stakeholders, including underrepresented groups?

The evaluation faced several limitations that shaped the scope and depth of findings. The short project timeline made it difficult to track the full scope of user outcomes, mainly as recruitment and apprenticeship processes often unfolded over months and varied with training intakes and upgrading needs. The capacity of apprenticeship liaisons influenced the scope of data collection. While a streamlined PMIS aimed to support low-burden tracking, this system was not well integrated into daily workflows, which impacted the precision of data entry. While the survey response rates were higher than previous years, many users did not complete these surveys (despite incentives and multiple follow-up attempts), which could impact the generalizability of the results. Finally, user outcomes are influenced by broader training and workforce fluctuations in the construction sector—such as hiring freezes and training waitlists—that cannot be fully anticipated and impact user outcomes.

In addition to these limitations, several adjustments were made to the evaluation plan during implementation. SRDC did not conduct formal interviews as part of a needs-analysis phase; instead, CBTU engaged directly with unions and training centres to understand recruitment needs, as the volume of information required across regions made formal interviews impractical

and likely to slow implementation. SRDC did carry out informal interviews with project partners to document implementation experiences, but these were not structured as needs-analysis activities. Changes were also made to the baseline data strategy. Although an intake survey was available throughout this phase, low response rates led SRDC to rely more heavily on information collected during the BYS Learning Hub sign-up process. Finally, while the PMIS was designed to capture detailed information on the types of support provided by apprenticeship liaisons, this information was not consistently recorded. As a result, the outcome survey was adapted to collect user-reported information on the supports they received.

# EVIDENCE AND INSIGHTS

## TRANSITION TO VIRTUAL RECRUITMENT ECOSYSTEM

### Increasing Awareness of Virtual Recruitment Resources

**FSC Strategic Questions:** What interventions are most effective in smoothing job transitions for people currently out of the labour market or those in precarious employment? What interventions are the most effective in addressing the diverse needs of workers who have been out of the labour market for varying lengths of time?

**Project Research Questions:** Were the social media and advertising campaigns effective in increasing awareness of unionized trades opportunities and driving traffic to Virtual Recruitment resources? What is the profile of participants who use the Build Your Skills Learning Hub?

Building on the strong results of earlier phases—which demonstrated that paid and organic outreach through a variety of social media and Google platforms effectively increased awareness of the Virtual Recruitment resources—the project expanded this proven advertising approach in 2025. Building on previous marketing insights and lessons, the team launched a two-phased advertising campaign across Facebook, Instagram, Google Search, and YouTube:

- **Phase 1** (June 4 to July 2) drove traffic to a BYS Learning Hub information page on each provincial site to increase awareness of skill-building resources and encourage new users to sign up. This initial campaign reintroduced the Virtual Recruitment program, helped validate platform performance, and generated initial site activity. Findings from this phase supported more advanced targeting and retargeting advertising in the fall.
- **Phase 2** (October 1 to November 30) drove traffic to tailored home pages designed to encourage women, youth, and newcomers to explore the construction building trades—a shift to a more personalized outreach approach. In addition, this phase retargeted users who had previously visited the BYS Learning Hub, a new advertising approach implemented in this phase.

As shown in Figure 1, both campaigns were successful in terms of: 1) increasing awareness, as measured by the number of times ads were seen (i.e., impressions); 2) driving traffic, as measured by the number of times people clicked on an ad (i.e., clicks) and navigated to a Provincial Building Trade Councils' Construction Trades Hub site (i.e., website visits); and 3) growing the number of Virtual Recruitment users accessing skill development resources, as measured by the number of people who completed a form to join the BYS Learning Hub (i.e., conversions).

In terms of performance across platforms, Facebook and Instagram had the highest number of impressions (6.66m) and clicks (283k), followed by YouTube (4.51m impressions and 90k clicks) and Google Search (326k impressions and 25k clicks). While the majority of clicks came from social platforms, showing strong reach and engagement, Google search had the highest click-through rate (7.8 per cent), indicating that users were more likely to take action when they saw an ad. Across both campaigns, video assets outperformed carousel and static ads in terms of the number of clicks. A video ad targeting youth in Phase 2 was the best performing asset, generating 61,733 clicks alone.

**Figure 1 Overall Performance of Phase 1 and 2 Advertising Campaigns**

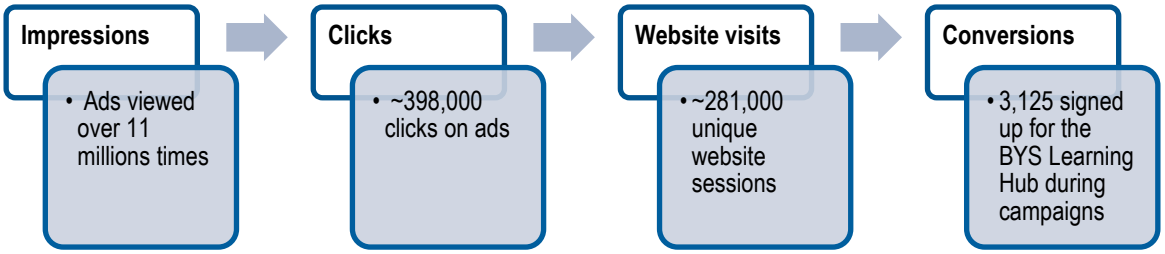



Table 1 reports the outcomes of the paid campaigns overall and by province. Across both phases, advertising channels generated 96 per cent of all website traffic during campaign periods, making them the dominant source of visits. This traffic increased the number of people who signed up for the BYS Learning Hub, with paid advertising being a key driver of these conversions. As discussed in more detail below, many users also registered through additional traffic sources.

**Table 1 Outcomes of Paid Campaigns by Phase and Region**

| | Website sessions from paid sources | | Clicks to registration page | | BYS sign-ups during Phase | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *Phase 1* | *Phase 2* | *Phase 1* | *Phase 2* | *Phase 1* | *Phase 2* |
| **Overall** | **71,254** | **210,194** | **551** | **5,432** | **710** | **2,415** |
| British Columbia | 12,759 | 28,880 | 21 | 230 | 28 | 90 |
| Alberta | 13,092 | 27,784 | 92 | 476 | 52 | 284 |
| Saskatchewan | 10,456 | 20,115 | 80 | 276 | 50 | 147 |
| Manitoba | 8,823 | 21,445 | 60 | 243 | 45 | 131 |
| Ontario[1] | *Not active* | 34,982 | *Not active* | 481 | 83 | 313 |
| Québec | 2,602 | 17,649 | 57 | 3,090 | 302 | 1,053 |
| New Brunswick | 8,565 | 19,126 | 116 | 222 | 51 | 141 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Newfoundland & Labrador | 6,806 | 18,344 | 34 | 169 | 28 | 102 |
| Nova Scotia | 8,151 | 21,869 | 91 | 245 | 71 | 154 |

[1] Ontario did not participate in the Phase 1 advertising campaign.

As expected, provinces with larger populations typically accounted for a higher share of sessions and registrations. An exception to this was Québec, which had smaller than expected paid advertising engagement numbers, as measured by their registration page clicks. However, regional partners were engaged in other recruitment efforts that helped boost overall engagement, reflected in the number of BYS Learning Hub sign-ups recorded during the outreach periods.

Along with Québec, other regional partners also engaged in their own outreach in 2025, which increased awareness of their organization and their provincial construction trades hub website. As a result, Provincial Building Trade Councils' Construction Trades Hub sites had traffic from referral links and organic search, with these visitors consistently demonstrating strong engagement. As reported in Table 2, however, 73 per cent of traffic to regional sites came from paid advertising campaigns.

Once users landed on each site, they had varying levels of engagement. Overall, 32 per cent of sessions were "engaged," meaning they lasted more than 10 seconds or contained at least two page/screen views or screen views. Across the Provincial Building Trade Councils' Construction Trades Hub sites, there were over 600,000 page views. The group-specific homepages for newcomers, women, and youth—designed as alternative entry points with tailored visuals and messaging (e.g., "Are you new to Canada and looking for a career?")—accounted for 30 percent of these page views in 2025, with the majority being for the homepage targeting youth.

## Table 2 Construction Trades Hub Site Engagement in 2025

| | *Users and session* | | | *N page views* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *N new users* | *% paid sources* | *N sessions (% engaged)*[1] | *Total* | *Youth homepage* | *Women homepage* | *Newcomer homepage* |
| **Overall** | **341,858** | **73** | **444,317 (32)** | **638,269** | **161,569** | **18,767** | **9,933** |
| British Columbia | 48,421 | 72 | 55,209 (20) | 80,405 | 20,025 | 3,024 | 1,117 |
| Alberta | 46,763 | 74 | 53,856 (23) | 80,165 | 19,780 | 3,605 | 1,193 |
| Saskatchewan | 31,863 | 80 | 35,904 (18) | 41,135 | 15,254 | 1,478 | 1,554 |
| Manitoba | 32,943 | 75 | 37,961 (21) | 63,981 | 17,312 | 1,030 | 1,228 |
| Ontario | 67,466 | 62 | 127,811 (52) | 184,678 | 28,886 | 3,088 | *Not active* |
| Québec | 22,780 | 75 | 28,975 (66) | 55,509 | 16,303 | 1,272 | 1,506 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| New Brunswick | 28,476 | 80 | 31,440 (15) | 37,020 | 14,092 | 1,795 | 257 |
| Newfoundland & Labrador | 29,831 | 74 | 34,686 (15) | 49,341 | 13,038 | 1,990 | 1,799 |
| Nova Scotia | 33,315 | 79 | 38,475 (18) | 46,035 | 16,879 | 1,485 | 1,417 |

A session qualified as “engaged” if it lasted more than 10 seconds, included a key event, or contained at least two page views or screen views. This metric helps identify meaningful website interactions.

Overall, targeted outreach through paid campaigns was an effective way to engage individuals interested in exploring the skilled construction trades, including young people who may be entering the labour market or adults transitioning between employment and sectors. The project’s two-phased advertising strategy provided both broad awareness-building and personalized, group-specific engagement, both of which encouraged users to access skill-building resources and tailored supports. This targeted approach proved highly effective: paid campaigns drove 96 per cent of landing-page sessions during campaign periods and 69 per cent of BYS Learning Hub registrations, with video assets and youth-focused content performing especially well. The strong engagement across platforms, combined with regional partners’ own outreach, showed that outreach that meets people where they are—online, on social platforms, and through culturally or demographically relevant messaging—helps increase visibility of supportive resources.

# TRANSITION TO SKILLS DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

**FSC Strategic Question:** What approaches are the most effective at equipping new labour market entrants with the skills that are most in demand by employers?

**Project Research Questions**: What were the key supports offered? How did users engage with the supports?

During this phase of the project, 7,109 individuals recruited from Virtual Recruitment channels across Canada registered on the BYS Learning Hub—3,125 during campaign periods and 3,984 during other periods when paid advertising was not active. In addition, another 11,202 new users signed up from other recruitment channels during this same period. The number of new users is comparably higher than those recruited during the previous phase of the project, which ran from April 1 to October 31, 2024 and recruited 2,841 Virtual Recruitment users and 5,505 users from other recruitment channels.

### Information Collected at Sign-up

Users in all regions (other than Québec) signed up for the BYS Learning Hub by completing a brief intake form, which collected: name; email; phone number; trade experience or pathway (e.g., exploring a trade, pre-apprentice, apprentice, or training provider); trade of interest (including "still deciding"); and how they learned about the BYS Learning Hub. On this form, individuals could indicate if they wanted support to: "connect to available construction job opportunities with a local union," and/or "receive information about getting into an apprenticeship at a union training school." This was used by the apprentice liaison to create an outreach contact list.

Among these new Virtual Recruitment users, 58 per cent were exploring the trades, 26 per cent were pre-apprentices, and 11 per cent were apprentices (see Table 3). Compared to the previous phase of the project, the share of Virtual Recruitment users identifying as pre-apprentice at intake increased by seven percentage points while the share of apprentice decreased by six percentage points.

In terms of regional differences in this phase of the project, the share of respondents identifying as "explorers" was highest on the Saskatchewan site (71 per cent) and lowest on the SkillPlan site (47 per cent), as shown in Table 3. The majority of new registrants (65 per cent) indicated that they wanted support to connect to available construction jobs and/or training opportunities.

**Table 3 Profile of BYS Virtual Recruitment Users at Intake (Feb 1-Dec 31, 2025)**

| | N | % Explorers | % Pre-Apprentice | % Apprentice | % Other | % Want support |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Overall** | 7,109 | 58 | 26 | 11 | 5 | 65 |
| SkillPlan site[1] | 2,060 | 47 | 28 | 17 | 8 | 52 |
| British Columbia | 210 | 60 | 30 | 9 | 1 | 85 |
| Alberta | 499 | 68 | 21 | 9 | 2 | 83 |

| | N | % Explorers | % Pre-Apprentice | % Apprentice | % Other | % Want support |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Saskatchewan | 263 | 71 | 20 | 5 | 4 | 78 |
| Manitoba | 254 | 65 | 25 | 6 | 4 | 78 |
| Ontario | 924 | 67 | 27 | 5 | 1 | 67 |
| Québec[2] | 2,168 | | | | | |
| New Brunswick | 245 | 60 | 24 | 10 | 6 | 79 |
| Newfoundland & Labrador | 179 | 68 | 21 | 10 | 1 | 76 |
| Nova Scotia | 307 | 66 | 20 | 10 | 4 | 74 |

[1] www.skillplan.ca/learn [2] Québec users did not use the same sign-up process and therefore did not collect intake information.

## *Intake Survey Results*

Within seven days of registering for BYS, new registrants were invited to complete a brief intake survey. From February to December 2025, 233 individuals from Virtual Recruitment channels and 541 individuals from other recruitment channels responded to the survey. The intake survey served as an important tool for gathering information on user demographics (e.g., age, gender, immigrant status, racialized status, Indigenous status), baseline confidence levels across various skills, and online learning challenges. Individuals may or may not have started accessing the resources and course materials on BYS at this time of completing the survey.

**Figure 2 Profile of BYS Users Who Completed Intake Survey (Feb 1-Dec 31, 2025)**

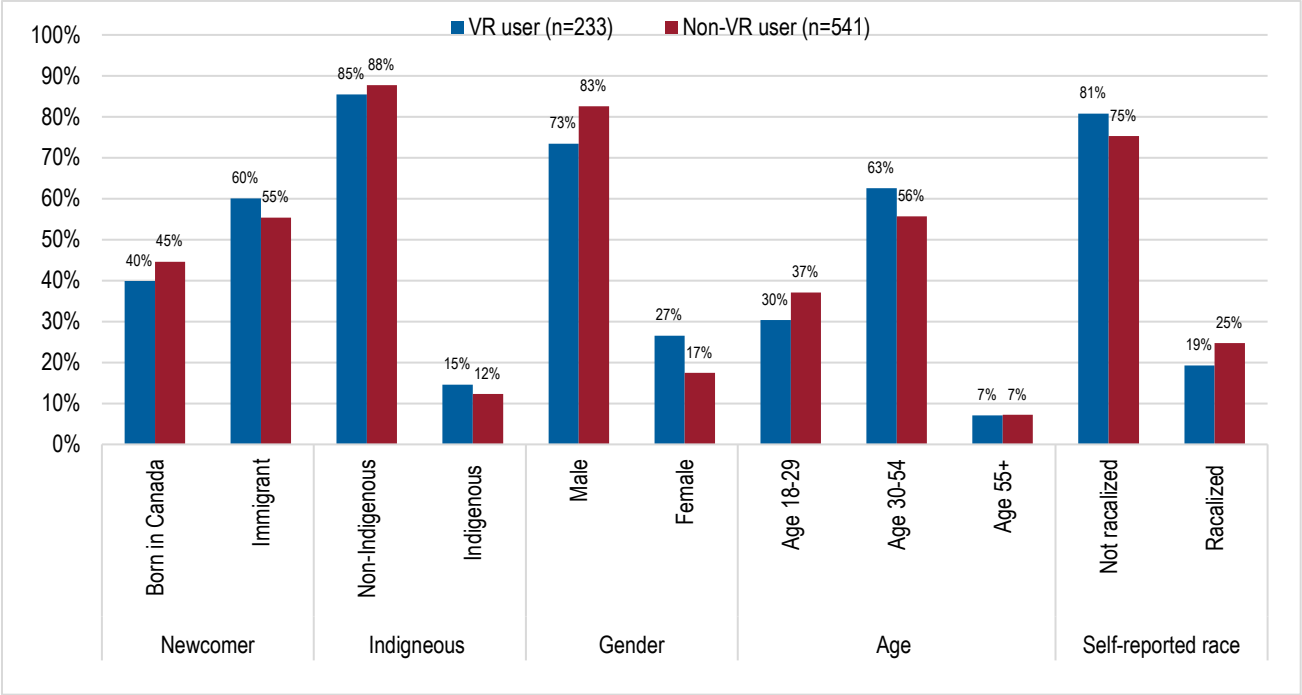


Figure 2 illustrates the demographic characteristics of the new registrants who completed the intake survey. Over half of respondents were newcomers, with a slightly higher percentage arriving through Virtual Recruitment channels (60 per cent) compared to other channels (55 per cent). Most new registrants were male, although Virtual Recruitment encouraged a higher percentage (27 per cent) of females to join the BYS Learning Hub, an increase of seven percentage points from the previous phase of the project. Approximately one-in-three respondents were youth aged 18-29, while the majority were adults aged 30-54. Among Virtual Recruitment respondents, 15 per cent self-identified as Indigenous and 19 per cent identified as racialized, the latter figure being a slightly lower percentage compared to other channels (25 per cent). The percentage of Indigenous Virtual Recruitment respondents increased five percentage points compared to results from the previous phase of the project, while the percentage of racialized responded decreased five percentage points.

Intake survey respondents were asked to rate their confidence in several trade-specific skill areas, such as math and reading skills needed for the trades, skills needed to interpret trades-related documents, and trades-specific problem-solving skills. Overall, 55 per cent of intake survey respondents were very or completely confident in their math skills. Confidence in reading skills was even higher, with 85 per cent of Virtual Recruitment users and 71 per cent of other users citing they were very or completely confident in these skills needed for the trades. Just over 50 per cent of Virtual Recruitment and non-Virtual Recruitment users were very or completely confident in skills needed to interpret and apply trades-related documents, while slightly more Virtual Recruitment users (70 per cent) than other users (64 per cent) were very or completely confident in skills needed to solve problems in the trades.

High levels of self-reported confidence at baseline may reflect limited awareness of the trade-specific skills required to enter the field and succeed in training. In another BYS Learning Hub evaluation project, users completed the same survey questions 30 days after signing up. These follow-up responses showed that confidence levels remained similar or declined slightly, which may indicate that Learning Hub resources helped users recognize their own skill gaps and development needs.

Finally, the intake survey also asked users about their future plans in the skilled construction trades. Over 80 per cent of respondents indicated they were somewhat or very likely to start or continue apprenticeship training within the next year or two. Furthermore, a high percentage of survey respondents (82 per cent of other users and 78 per cent of Virtual Recruitment users) indicated that they plan to obtain their Red Seal or provincial journeyperson certificate in the future.

### *BYS Learning Hub Engagement*

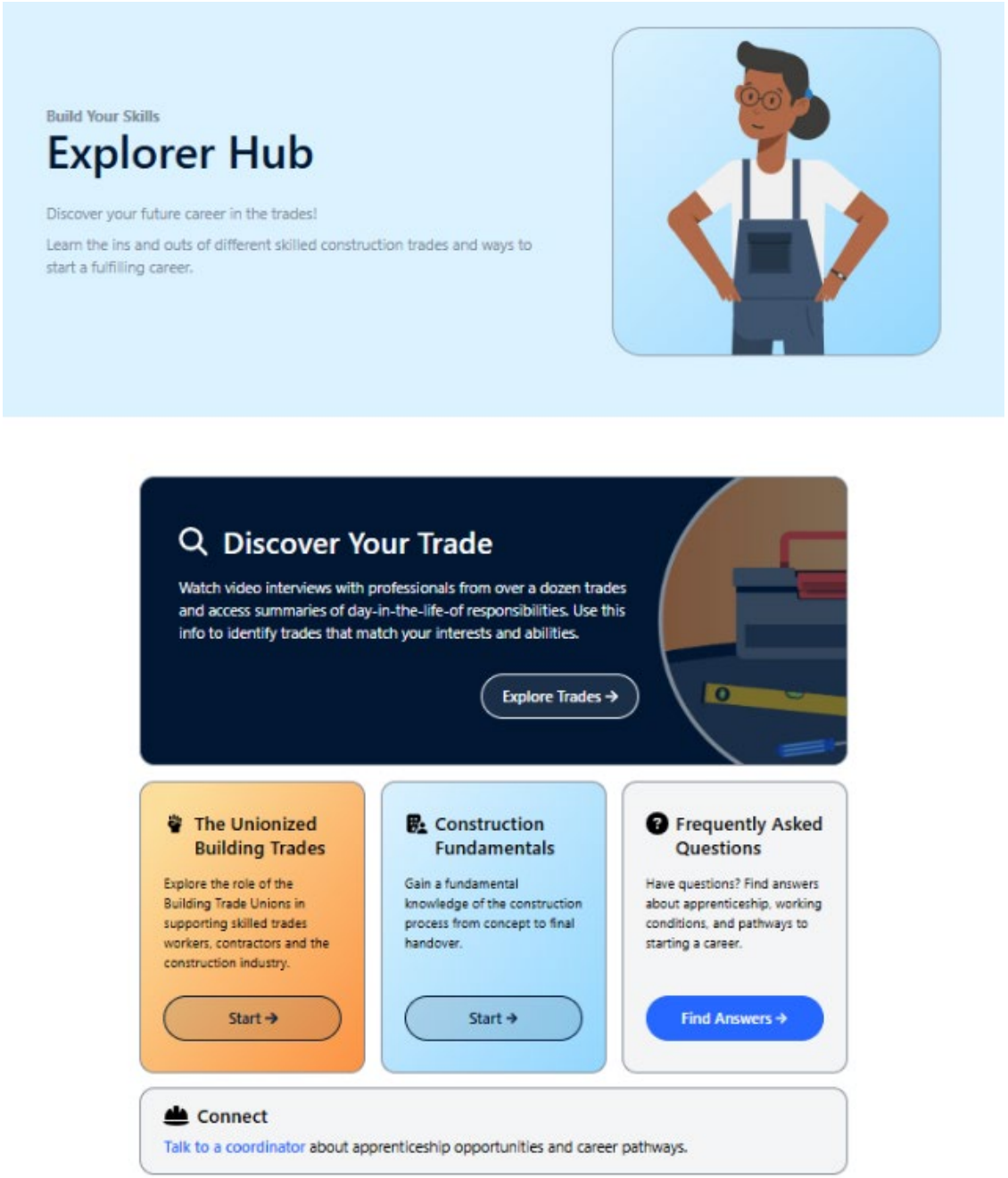
To assess user engagement after registration, SRDC linked intake, survey, and learning management system usage data to track the activities of users on the BYS Learning Hub (see Table 4). This analysis showed that half of Virtual Recruitment users logged in after signing up, a percentage that was lower than users who came from other recruitment channels (i.e., 68 per cent of users from other recruitment channels logged in at least once). However, the overall log-in rate among Virtual Recruitment users was significantly lowered by the comparatively low rate in Québec (19 per cent), whereas users in other regions logged in at higher levels, especially if they were pre-apprentices or apprentices (66 per cent).

The Phase Four results highlight increased BYS Learning Hub engagement compared to previous phases of the project. In particular, Phase Three log in rates were notably lower: 33 per cent of Virtual Recruitment users from provincial sites, 41 percent of Virtual Recruitment users from the SkillPlan site, and 61 per cent of users from other recruitment channels logged in once they signed up.

Once Phase Four users logged in, they demonstrated strong engagement. Among users who came from other recruitment channels, 94 per cent accessed learning content, engaging in an average of 2.4 courses. Among Virtual Recruitment users, 70 per cent accessed learning content, with an average of 2.2 courses. Virtual Recruitment pre-apprentices showed the highest engagement: They were the most likely to access course content (79 per cent) and engaged with the highest number of courses (2.5 courses) on average. Explorers who logged on also engaged meaningfully, with 65 per cent accessing course content. This variation reflects the structure of the BYS Learning Hub, which is intentionally organized into distinct hubs. The Explorer Hub (see Figure 3) emphasizes guided trade discovery and exploration, rather than structured course progression, meaning learners often complete other interactive experiences on the BYS Learning Hub.

The most common courses Virtual Recruitment users accessed were related to developing trade-specific math skills (68 per cent), taking assessment and supporting test preparation (47 per cent), and learning trade-specific science skills (18 per cent). A large share of Virtual Recruitment users from Québec accessed the French-language “Getting started” course, which introduced the BYS Learning Hub.

**Figure 3 Explorer Hub Homepage**



## Table 4 BYS Learning Hub Access and Usage

| | | | | *% accessing course type (if accessed any course)* | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **% logging in** | **% accessing 1+ course** (if log on) | **Av. # course** (if accessed courses) | **Math** | **Science** | **Assessment & test prep** | **Reading & doc. use** | **Trades prep** | **Getting started** |
| **Non-VR learners (n=11,202)** | 68 | 94 | 2.4 | 35 | 16 | 38 | 15 | 12 | 0 |
| **All VR Users (n=7,109)** | 50 | 70 | 2.2 | 69 | 18 | 47 | 15 | 13 | 7 |
| **By Trades Hub** | | | | | | | | | |
| British Columbia | 51 | 66 | 1.9 | 66 | 14 | 47 | 9 | 14 | 0 |
| Alberta | 61 | 66 | 2.1 | 73 | 22 | 46 | 16 | 10 | 1 |
| Saskatchewan | 62 | 60 | 1.7 | 59 | 15 | 56 | 12 | 8 | 0 |
| Manitoba | 56 | 73 | 2.1 | 66 | 18 | 50 | 14 | 13 | 3 |
| Ontario | 67 | 69 | 2.1 | 73 | 13 | 49 | 14 | 14 | 1 |
| Québec | 19 | 67 | 2.1 | 53 | 9 | 58 | 1 | 1 | 60 |
| New Brunswick | 58 | 66 | 2.0 | 71 | 21 | 43 | 11 | 13 | 2 |
| Newfoundland & Labrador | 64 | 60 | 1.9 | 62 | 25 | 47 | 12 | 16 | 0 |
| Nova Scotia | 64 | 62 | 1.8 | 72 | 15 | 43 | 12 | 12 | 0 |
| SkillPlan site | 65 | 76 | 2.4 | 73 | 22 | 44 | 21 | 17 | 1 |
| **By Entry Level** | | | | | | | | | |
| Explorer | 62 | 65 | 2.0 | 71 | 16 | 50 | 13 | 3 | 1 |
| Pre-apprentice | 66 | 79 | 2.5 | 75 | 21 | 48 | 18 | 28 | 1 |
| Apprentice | 66 | 78 | 2.0 | 66 | 23 | 32 | 21 | 28 | 1 |
| Other | 67 | 73 | 2.6 | 68 | 30 | 25 | 35 | 16 | 2 |
| Missing[1] | 19 | 67 | 2.1 | 53 | 9 | 58 | 2 | 1 | 59 |

[1] The majority of Virtual Recruitment users missing entry level information were from Québec, which had a separate sign-up process.

### *Apprenticeship Liaison Supports*

From May 2025 through February 2026, two Canada's Building Trades Unions (CBTU) apprenticeship liaisons conducted outreach and provided support to Virtual Recruitment users. To ensure users were connected with appropriate training, unions, and other supportive organizations, CBTU apprenticeship liaisons carried out a needs analysis to understand recruitment requirements and intake processes. This coordination with unions and partner organizations ensured that users were referred only to unions actively accepting new members or to training programs with upcoming openings.

**CBTU's apprenticeship liaisons** played an important role in the project by connecting prospective apprentices to the union training and employment options. Through CBTU's close ties with industry, unions, and training providers, the liaison were able to provide information on current job opportunities, apprenticeship openings, and training pathways, helping individuals access and navigate union careers in the skilled trades.

To monitor user outreach, the apprenticeship liaisons used a Project Management Information System built in Excel to record interactions with Virtual Recruitment users who expressed interest in support connecting to construction jobs and/or training opportunities. They conducted outreach to users across Canada, with the exception of Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador, which already had province-specific outreach or support systems in place.

Overall, apprenticeship liaison outreach involved both:

- **Union and trades-support engagement**: Mapping and documenting union intake processes and requirements across Canada to facilitate referring users to unions accepting new members with their qualifications. Apprenticeship liaisons also identified programs and support for underrepresented groups in different regions to expand referral options.
- **User engagement**: Communicating with and triaging individual users who requested connections to training and union opportunities. This outreach included documenting participants' background, experience, and qualifications, as well as their readiness for employment and/or training, trade of interest, and required support needs.

Through their outreach to unions, CBTU's apprenticeship liaisons identified key contacts at unions and training centres, along with each organization's intake processes. They documented requirements and timelines for new member intakes, which shifted over the course of the project as unions adapted to changing regional workforce needs. Recognizing significant variation across regions and organizations, apprenticeship liaisons determined that a flexible, continuously updated reference document on union and training program openings was essential.

The user outreach process was refined throughout 2025 as apprenticeship liaisons continued to adjust and improve their approach. In most cases, initial contact was made by email. This email, updated several times over the year, invited users to complete an intake support survey designed to help apprenticeship liaisons assess interest in receiving support, training or employment readiness, and preferred trades. The survey also provided an option for users to submit their résumés.

After a user responded to the initial outreach email or completed the survey, an apprenticeship liaison typically followed up by email to schedule a phone call. During the call, they provided personalized support and coaching based on the user's needs and offered referrals as appropriate. Support often included guidance on applying to unions and training programs, along with information about specific trades. Following this initial contact, apprenticeship liaisons often maintained ongoing engagement, which included documenting participants' experiences, challenges, and successes.

**Tracking outreach**

As of December 2025, the PMIS recorded 1,599 users who had received at least one email or voice message from a CBTU apprenticeship liaison. Approximately 335 users (21 per cent) responded to outreach at least once, with many engaging in multiple follow-up conversations. This response rate is consistent with typical online outreach, where users may be hesitant to engage or may overlook messages from unfamiliar senders.

Because of the project's compressed timelines and the high volume of users, CBTU's apprenticeship liaisons found it difficult to track the extent to which participants followed through on the coaching and recommendations. Although the original plan was to capture these outcomes through PMIS entries, this approach was later revised. Instead, outcomes were assessed through a survey administered in December 2025, which is described in the next section of this report.

# TRANSITION TO TRAINING, UNIONS, AND EMPLOYMENT

**FSC Strategic Questions**: What are the key ingredients to helping individuals successfully transition to new employment opportunities or keep up with the evolving skills requirements of their jobs? What labour sector and/or regional considerations are helpful when designing career guidance services?

**Project Research Questions**: After using Virtual Recruitment supports, to what extent did participants take steps towards employment and training in the skilled trades sector, such as contacting a union, completing a union application, applying for training programs, completing exam preparation, or initiating self-directed trades-related learning?

SRDC led a bilingual survey (e.g., the "Skilled Trades Opportunity and Support survey") that collected outcome data from individuals across Canada who had indicated that they were seeking trades training and/or employment information and support through: a regional Trades Hubs "Connect to Union" form, the BYS Learning Hub registration form, or an internal form on the BYS Learning Hub between February 1 and November 2025. The English and French surveys were strategically administered between December 1 and 18, 2025, allowing individuals maximum opportunity within the project timeline to access supports from apprenticeship liaisons or other sources and complete actions toward reaching their training and/or employment goals. A total of 387 responses were gathered (315 English and 72 French) from a wide range of Virtual Recruitment users:

- **Survey participants lived across Canada.** Survey respondents were from eight provinces, with 22 per cent from Alberta, 20 per cent from Ontario, 18 per cent from Québec, 10 per cent from British Columbia, and about 5 per cent from Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Saskatchewan each. Sixty per cent of respondents indicated that they had current or past trades work experience within or outside of Canada, though several respondents commented that this was casual or home-based work.

- **They were interested in a range of trades.** Respondents were also asked to indicate the construction trade they were interested in or were currently working in. The most frequent trades were electrician (17 per cent), carpenter (13 per cent), plumber and/or pipefitter (13 per cent), and welder (8 per cent). Among all respondents, 11 per cent indicated that they had not chosen a trade.

- **A sizable proportion of respondents were from groups underrepresented in the trades.** Youth aged 18-29 represented 30 per cent of all survey respondents, while a third were recent newcomers (within 5 years). Racialized and female respondents were each approximately 30 per cent, with a smaller proportion of respondents identifying as Indigenous (11 per cent).

## User Goals and Outcomes

At the time of responding, 40 per cent were working and/or training in the trades,[2] while 58 per cent were not yet working or training in the trades but were still interested in entering this sector. The remaining three per cent were no longer interested in a trades career. Because it can take months—or even years—for individuals to begin trades training or employment, these early results indicate ongoing momentum: people remained interested in the field, and some had already been able to enter the sector.

Early employment and training outcomes were associated with initial goal(s) when registering for the BYS Learning Hub. When asked about their multiple goals at intake, 51 per cent were looking for a job in the trades, 48 per cent were exploring different trades career options, and 40 per cent were exploring training in the trades. There were high levels of interest in learning more about union jobs and membership, with 28 per cent looking for support to join a union, 24 per cent looking for information about unions, 13 per cent looking specifically for a unionized job, and 12 per cent looking to transition from a non-unionized to a unionized position.

Based on the range of goals users had at intake, SRDC grouped respondents into the following **intended goal categories** to combine individuals with similar intentions: only exploring the trades (16 per cent); looking for union-specific training and employment support (45 per cent); only looking for job support (18 per cent); only looking for training information (12 per cent); and looking for both job and training support (9 per cent).

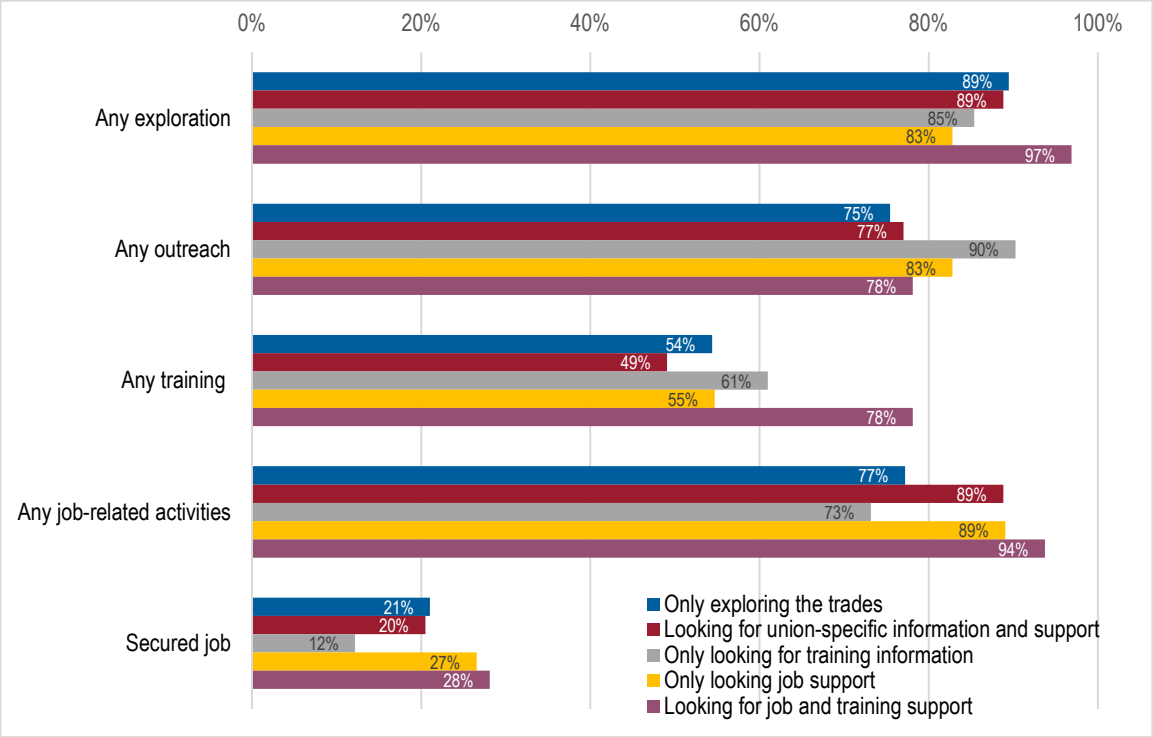
The survey asked a series of questions that collected information on the steps taken towards training, union membership, and employment since signing up. Actions were grouped into the following areas: general/exploration; communication/outreach; training; and job-related activities. Questions probed whether respondents had started training and/or secured a job. See Appendix B for the overall proportion of respondents initiating each action.

SRDC analyzed the actions that respondents had completed by their goal category at registration to determine whether intention and readiness-level were associated with user outcomes. As shown in Figure 4, most respondents had completed at least one exploration-based action, especially if they were looking for both job *and* training support.

A high percentage of users had also completed at least one outreach action since registration, such as communicating with a trades union, training centre, or friends, family and/or teachers about the skilled trades. Approximately three-quarters of those only exploring the trades or looking for union-specific information completed at least one outreach action, while 90 per cent of those only looking for training information completed outreach actions.

[2] Among these people, 20 per cent were working in the trades, 13 per cent were training in the trades, and seven per cent were working and training in the trades.

### Figure 4 Actions Completed Since Signing Up




More than half of all respondents had undertaken at least one training action since registration, such as starting a course on the BYS Learning Hub or starting pre-apprentice, apprentice or college trades training. The largest percentage of users starting any training were those looking for job *and* training support (78 per cent), while 61 per cent of those looking only for training information started training.

When examining the percentage of survey respondents who had completed job-related actions—such as creating/updating a resume/CV, applying for a job, or starting a job in the trades—users only exploring the trades (77 per cent) or only looking for training information (73 per cent) were the least likely to complete a job action, an expected result given their initial goal. A high percentage of users looking for union-specific training or employment (89 per cent), only looking for job support (89 per cent), and looking for job and training support (94 per cent) completed a job-related action.

Finally, SRDC analyzed the percentage of users who had secured a unionized or non-unionized trades job since registration. Twenty-one per cent of users who were only exploring the trades and 20 per cent of users looking for union-specific support secured a job, while close to three in ten users only looking for job support (27 per cent) and looking for job *and* training support (28 per cent) secured jobs. Twelve per cent of users only looking for training information secured a job.

Overall, respondents' initial goals—whether they were simply exploring the trades or actively seeking a job or training—were closely tied to the outcomes they achieved. Users who were primarily exploring reported lower levels of outreach, training, and job-related actions. This level of engagement could suggest they were satisfied with gathering information and learning about the construction trades without taking further steps. In contrast, users who entered the system with the intention of finding a job reported higher levels of completing job-related activities, as well as higher rates of securing employment. Their behaviour could reflect a stronger commitment to taking concrete actions such as contacting unions, applying for positions, and ultimately obtaining a job.

Finally, SRDC also analyzed how the types of actions individuals completed varied by demographic group. A more detailed breakdown of these results can be seen in Appendix B, however there are a few important results to highlight:

- **Training outcomes**: youth were more likely to start training compared to adults, while newcomers and racialized respondents were less likely to have started training compared to their counterparts.
- **Employment outcomes**: Female respondents were less likely to secure a trades job compared to males. In addition, 8 per cent fewer racialized people secured a job compared to their non-racialized counterparts.

### *Supports Received and Satisfaction with Support*

Overall, two-thirds of the survey respondents reported that they had received support through an email, phone call, or voice message from a supportive source, such as an apprenticeship liaison or a provincial building trade council. The remaining one-third wanted support but did not receive it.

The frequency of outreach varied, which could be connected to the needs of the individual or the availability of support. For those who did receive supports, approximately half received outreach once. A quarter of the individuals received communication multiple times within a month, while 27 per cent received outreach multiple times over weeks or months.

**Support for groups underrepresented in the trades**

Across Canada, a range of organizations provide targeted supports for individuals from underrepresented groups in the skilled trades—such as women, Indigenous peoples, and newcomers. As part of their role, apprenticeship liaisons informed participants about these organizations and any programs offered.

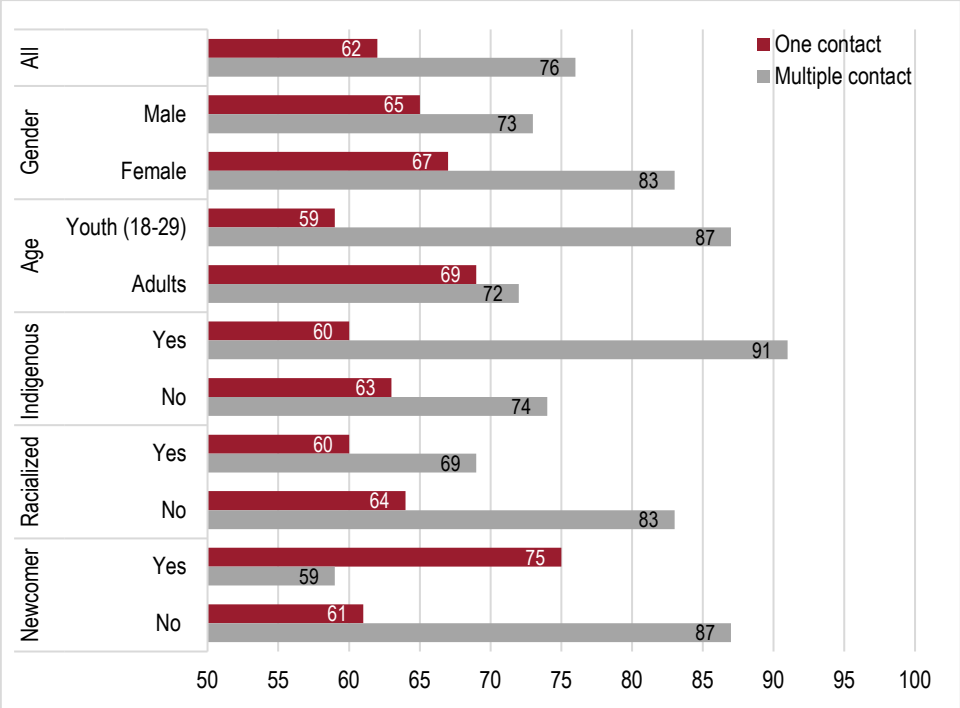
Overall, 40 per cent of survey respondents reported finding an organization that supported specific groups in the trades, and 27 per cent had communicated directly with one of these organizations.

Approximately 50 per cent of survey respondents who received supports were still receiving support at the time of being surveyed. For those who were no longer receiving support, 40 per cent had not heard back after the initial communication, 29 per cent no longer needed support, and 28 per cent indicated that the support did not meet their needs.

***What type of support did people receive?*** Survey respondents reported receiving a variety of supports based on their individual needs, including trades requirement advice (e.g., work permits, required education/course) (43 per cent); trades training navigation (41 per cent); skills development guidance (40 per cent); and union membership information (38 per cent).

Overall, 69 per cent of survey respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with the supports they received. As shown in Figure 5, satisfaction levels increased among respondents who had more than one point of contact, and the pattern varied across demographic groups.

**Figure 5 Percentage Satisfied with Supports Received by Number of Contacts**



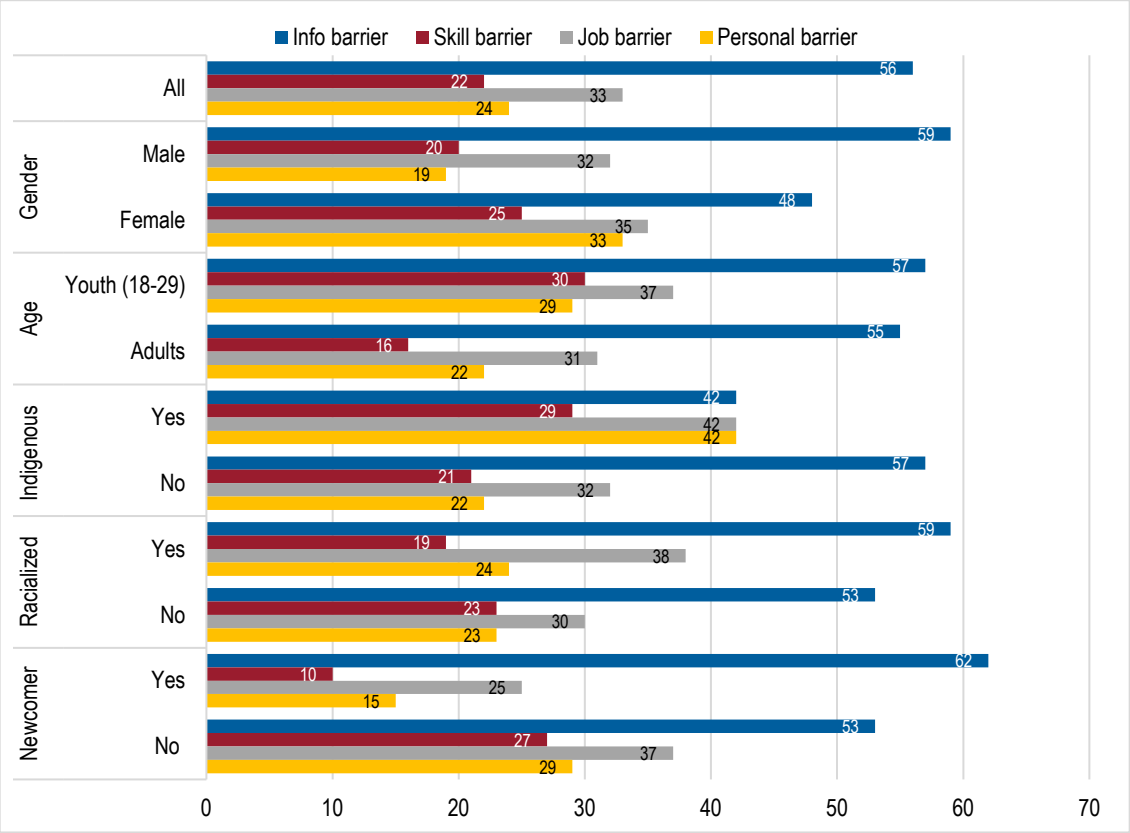

For women and Indigenous respondents, satisfaction levels were similar to their counterparts when they had only one contact. However, when they received multiple contacts, their satisfaction increased to a greater extent, suggesting that these groups may benefit from more frequent outreach. A similar pattern emerged among youth: with only one contact, they reported lower satisfaction than adults, but with more than one contact, their satisfaction surpassed that of adult respondents.

Overall, racialized respondents reported lower satisfaction levels than non-racialized respondents, and this gap widened among those who had more than one point of contact. This pattern may relate to the trend observed among newcomers. Newcomers with only one contact reported higher satisfaction than individuals born in Canada or those who had lived in the country for more than five years. However, when newcomers received multiple contacts, their satisfaction declined, whereas satisfaction increased for their Canadian-born or longer-term resident counterparts.

## *Barriers users faced*

Survey respondents were also asked to identify the types of barriers or challenges they faced when pursuing opportunities in the construction trades. These barriers were grouped into four categories—information, skill, employment, and personal barriers—as shown in Figure 6. While Appendix B provides detailed percentages for each specific barrier, this section highlights the broader patterns experienced by different groups. Overall, information barriers were the most frequently reported, though roughly one-third of respondents faced employment-related barriers and about one-quarter reported skill or personal barriers.

**Figure 6 Percentage Reporting Barriers Overall and by Demographic Group**



When examining barriers by gender, men were more likely than women to report information-related barriers, while women were more likely to identify one or more personal barriers. The proportion of respondents reporting skill- or job-related barriers was similar for both men and women.

When comparing barriers faced by youth and adults, the most notable difference appeared in skill-related barriers: 30 per cent of youth reported facing skill barriers, compared with only 16 per cent of adults. Just over half of respondents in both age groups reported information barriers, and the proportions were similarly aligned for job-related and personal barriers.

Indigenous respondents were less likely than non-Indigenous respondents to report information barriers, but they were more likely to identify job-related or personal barriers. In contrast, racialized respondents and newcomers were slightly more likely than their counterparts to report information barriers. Newcomers, however, reported much lower levels of skill-related and personal barriers compared with their comparison group, while racialized and non-racialized respondents showed similar patterns in these areas.

# LESSONS LEARNED

Phase Four of the Virtual Recruitment project achieved several key objectives that broadened user outreach and enhanced support, enabling more explorers, pre-apprentices, and apprentices to access information, learning resources, and guidance as they considered entering the unionized construction trades. As discussed in the following section, many of the activities undertaken during this phase generated insights that are valuable not only for stakeholders across the construction trades, but also for programs and initiatives that deliver virtual employment and skills supports to a large number of users.

Phase Four also introduced updates to the BYS Learning Hub, improving access to information on different trades, course materials, assessments, and other resources for users at various stages of their apprenticeship journey. Alongside the development of new content, improvements to the sign-up process and website navigation made it easier for users to engage with the platform.

## KEY SUCCESSES

**Collaborative outreach planning enhanced user engagement.**

- Collaborative planning with partners was essential for designing effective outreach strategies. By jointly shaping advertising efforts, outreach activities, and survey tools, the team gained a clearer understanding of how to target users, what motivated their engagement, and how to ensure that participation genuinely supported their goals.

**Advertising campaigns increased awareness of the unionized construction trades and expanded the number of Virtual Recruitment users accessing resources.**

- Two targeted advertising phases were successful in increasing broad awareness of skill-building resources and driving new users to sign up to the BYS Learning Hub. This phase further refined the Virtual Recruitment advertising strategy by trialing a retargeting campaign and developing targeted approaches to connect specific demographic groups with tailored resource pages. These efforts successfully reached new audiences and expanded the Virtual Recruitment user base as paid campaigns drove 96 per cent of landing-page sessions and 69 per cent of BYS Learning Hub registrations. Strong engagement across advertising platforms, combined with partners' own engagement, supported outreach and increased the visibility of Virtual Recruitment resources throughout the project.

**Apprenticeship liaison outreach proved valuable in offering tailored support and referrals.**

- Many BYS Learning Hub users expressed interest in union-related training, employment support, and information during sign-up. In response, CBTU apprenticeship liaisons developed a structured outreach process that aligned with union requirements and ensured users received relevant assistance. The apprenticeship liaison team brought several key strengths to this work. They had a deep understanding of union and construction environments, which helped them quickly build trust with both union locals and job seekers. Their career-coaching experience further strengthened their ability to guide users effectively. In addition, the liaisons were skilled at communicating with large numbers of individuals from diverse backgrounds and varying levels of readiness

**Mapping union pathways was necessary for referral success.**

- CBTU apprenticeship liaisons needed to invest time in mapping union opportunities and understanding each union's intake and onboarding requirements to ensure referrals could succeed. With the information gathered through this mapping process, apprenticeship liaisons could guide users toward unions actively recruiting other candidates with similar backgrounds, increasing the chances of success.

**Refinement of outreach materials strengthened the work of apprenticeship liaisons.**

- Between June and December 2025, two apprenticeship liaisons conducted outreach to approximately 1,600 new Virtual Recruitment users and provided individualized support and coaching to those who responded. During this period, the team refined outreach materials and processes to improve connection rates and ensure users received timely and effective assistance.

**New users engaged with a range of skills development resources.**

- More than 7,000 new users recruited through Virtual Recruitment channels across Canada registered on the BYS Learning Hub. Half of these users logged in at least once, and most who did went on to engage with course content. While users explored a variety of courses, math and assessment-preparation modules were especially popular among Virtual Recruitment participants. These patterns suggest strong demand for foundational skill-building resources and highlight opportunities to tailor future outreach and course offerings to user needs.

**Stakeholder collaboration unifies recruitment approaches and tools across Canada.**

- Stakeholder collaboration has played a central role in unifying recruitment approaches and tools across Canada. A core aim of the project has been to strengthen coordination among

unions and trades councils—many of which operate with limited staff and resources—and provide additional support through the addition of an apprenticeship liaison. This shared capacity has enabled councils to adopt common tools and practices, including standardized online assessments and accessible skill-development resources they can confidently refer prospective apprentices to. By working together and drawing on the same set of supports, partners are increasingly aligned in how they identify, prepare, and guide individuals into trades pathways.

This final lesson has important systems-level implications. For Provincial Councils and local unions, shared infrastructure and coordinated approaches can reduce duplication, improve efficiency, and strengthen service consistency across regions. The BYS Learning Hub also helps strengthen how unions and training providers support learners, providing a range of tools to identify skill gaps and tailor supports, which can lead to a better prepared pool of candidates entering apprenticeship pathways. The result is a more connected and adaptable training ecosystem that reflects industry needs and more effectively supports individuals as they progress from early interest in the trades to training and, eventually, employment. The project illustrates that when investments focus on scalable, sector-led platforms and coordinated systems, jurisdictions can work in alignment and avoid the inefficiencies and duplication that come with program-specific, fragmented solutions. Supporting these types of shared systems can lead to more coherent pathways into the skilled trades and more effective use of public resources.

## CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Sustaining high levels of user engagement in an online environment remains a persistent challenge, underscoring the need to continually test and refine new strategies that keep users active, motivated, and connected to available supports.**

- Throughout this project user engagement aimed to support trades exploration and career pathways. Stakeholders should continue testing and refining outreach strategies to ensure participant engagement remains high. Some potential approaches include exploring interactive content and various types of personalized follow-up—approaches that may help strengthen the connection between users and resources. By consistently monitoring engagement metrics and experimenting with new approaches, project partners can continue to identify what resonates most with users and adapt accordingly.

**Maintaining consistent and accurate documentation of liaison follow-up remains difficult, highlighting the need for ongoing refinement of data-collection processes.**

- The Project Management Information System (PMIS) was designed to accurately track liaison activities and user engagement but integrating it into day-to-day workflows proved

challenging. Continued refinement—particularly around capturing outreach and follow-up interactions—could improve assessment of the effectiveness of liaison support. Enhancements such as reducing data-entry burden, standardizing input protocols, and clarifying user-outcome categories are possible ways to strengthen data quality. Given the volume of users, SRDC recommends using a client management software that would capture date of contact, user needs, recommendations, and next steps during all communication to stream PMIS input and simplify reporting.

**Invest in dedicated tools and screening systems to improve liaison efficiency.**

- Apprenticeship liaison work was hindered by limited access to technological tools that could make it easier to track, monitor, and communicate with large volumes of users. Without streamlined systems, staff created ad-hoc solutions that were time-consuming and inconsistent. A reliable method to filter and sort new users—such as short pre-screening questionnaires or software that can scan resumes for key eligibility indicators—will help prioritize individuals who are eligible to work in Canada and genuinely prepared to engage with liaison support. Addressing these gaps will be essential to improving workflow efficiency and ensuring that staff time is focused where it can have the greatest impact.

**Extend timelines in track user employment and training outcomes.**

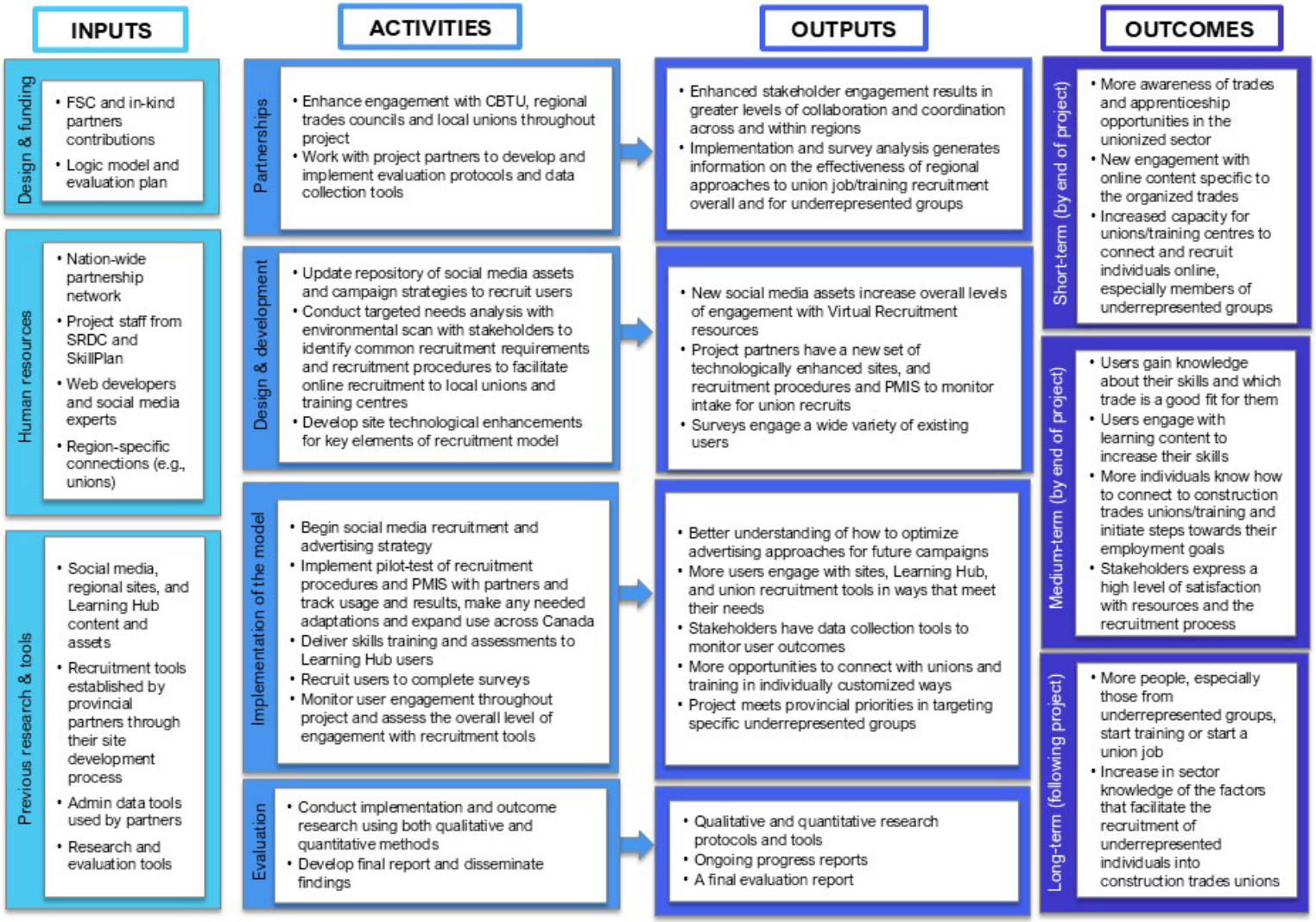
- Although many users were motivated and received support to begin pursuing their training and employment goals, a smaller proportion were able to secure trades jobs or start training within the project's timelines. With additional time to continue accessing supports and exploring opportunities, it is expected that more users will ultimately achieve their trades-related career goals. Nevertheless, expectations on these outcomes should always be viewed as indicative rather than conclusive until evidence from long-term follow-up is available.

# WHAT'S NEXT

As the project moves into its next phase, the central challenge is scaling personalized support for a rapidly growing number of users across Canada. The demand for guidance far exceeded initial expectations, revealing the need for a more efficient and sustainable support model. A key priority will be exploring how technology, such as AI-enabled tools, can help streamline user interactions, triage inquiries, and provide tailored information without overwhelming staff capacity. This includes developing mechanisms to distinguish between users who are ready for individualized, hands-on support and those who primarily need access to self-directed resources, assessments, and introductory information about the trades.

As the CBTU apprenticeship liaison service winds down, users will continue to have access to the online resources that support exploration of the skilled trades, including skills assessments, training materials, and information to help them take their next steps toward a career in the skilled trades. Future outreach and support work will continue to refine internal processes to ensure it can handle high volumes of inquiries, automate routine tasks, and maintain consistent quality of support. The project will continue to deepen collaboration with unions, training centres, Provincial Building Trades Councils, and other stakeholders to better understand their recruitment needs, workforce constraints, and the types of candidates they are best positioned to support. This engagement is critical in refining referral pathways, improving alignment between user readiness and union opportunities, and ensuring that the online tools continue to serve both prospective workers and the sector effectively.

# APPENDIX A: LOGIC MODEL

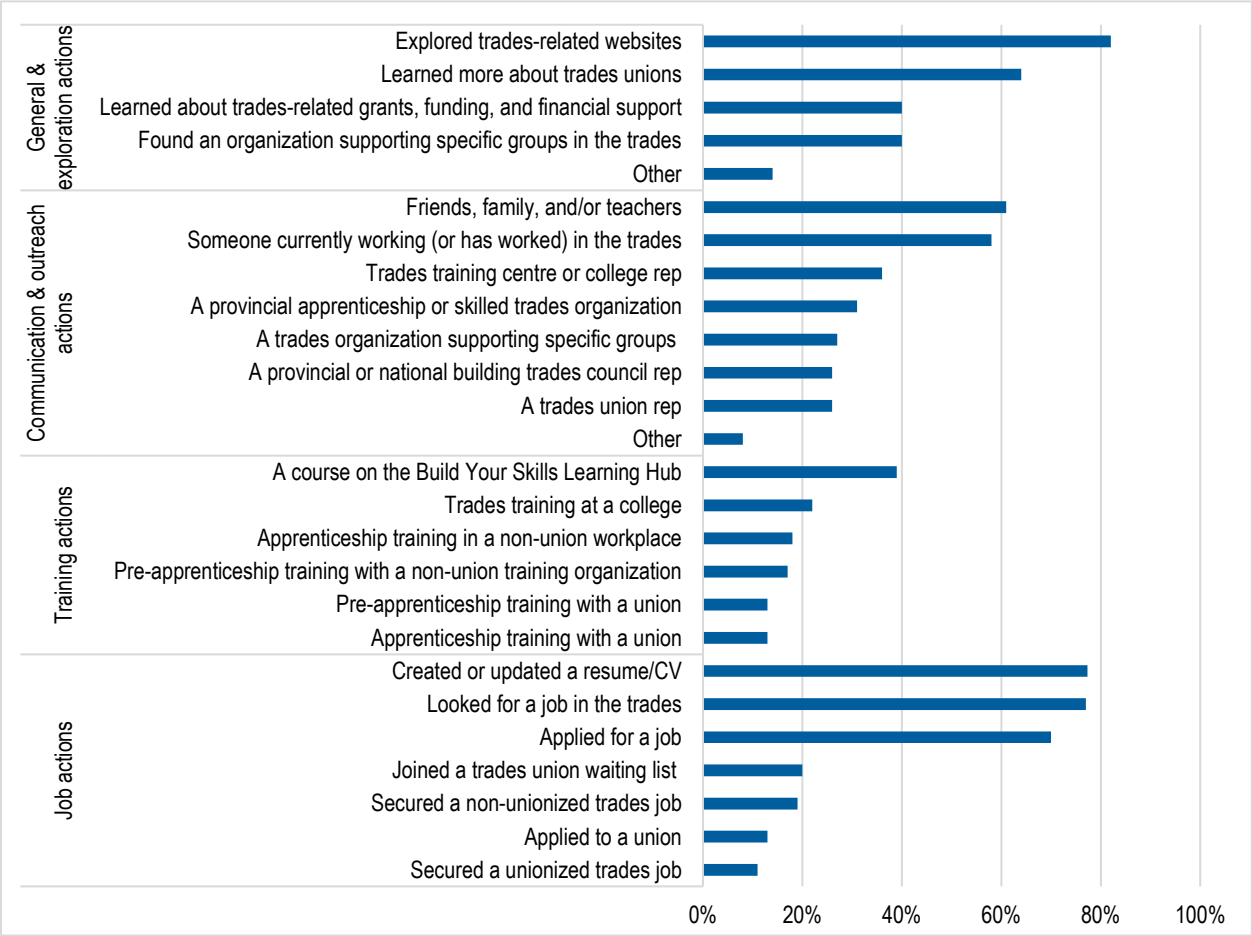


# APPENDIX B: SUPPLEMENTAL ANALYSIS

## Actions Users Completed Since Registering for Support

Figure 7 provides an overview of the actions survey respondents reported completing since signing up for the BYS Learning Hub. Across the four categories of activity, the outcome survey data showed that users engaged most heavily in early exploration and job-seeking behaviours, with 82 per cent visiting trades-related websites and 77 per cent looking for jobs in the trades. Many also deepened their understanding of the sector: 64 per cent learned more about trades unions, 40 per cent sought information on financial supports, and 40 per cent identified organizations serving underrepresented groups.

**Figure 7 Actions Taken Since Signing Up for the BYS Learning Hub**



Users frequently turned to people in their networks for guidance—61 per cent spoke with friends, family, or teachers, and 58 per cent connected with someone working in the trades—while smaller but meaningful proportions reached out to training centres, apprenticeship authorities, or organizations supporting equity-seeking groups.

Engagement with training opportunities varied, with 39 per cent completing a course on the BYS Learning Hub and smaller shares participating in college training (22 per cent), pre-apprenticeship programs (17-13 per cent), or apprenticeship training (18-13 per cent).

Job-related actions were also common: 77 per cent updated their résumé, 70 per cent applied for a job, and 20 per cent joined a union waiting list, though fewer ultimately secured employment (19 per cent non-union, 11 per cent union). Together, these results suggest strong initial interest and exploration, active job-seeking, and moderate uptake of training pathways, with fewer users progressing into unionized employment.

### *Actions Completed by Demographic Groups*

Across gender groups, there were minimal differences in actions taken. A large majority of male, female, and other gender respondents—roughly 80 to 90 per cent—completed at least one exploration, outreach, or job-related action. About 40 per cent in each group started trades training (excluding BYS). One notable difference emerged in job outcomes: 25 per cent of males secured a job compared with 14 per cent of females.

Patterns were similarly consistent across age groups. Youth (18–29) and adults (30+) reported high rates of completing exploration actions (88 per cent), outreach actions (80 per cent), job-related actions (87 per cent), and starting any training (56 per cent). However, youth were more likely to start trades training (44 per cent vs. 34 per cent for adults) and more likely to secure a job (26 per cent vs. 19 per cent).

Comparable trends appeared among newcomers (in Canada less than five years) and racialized respondents. Exploration, outreach, and job-related actions were completed at similar rates across groups. Yet newcomers were less likely to start trades training (29 per cent vs. 42 per cent for non-newcomers), and racialized respondents were also less likely to start trades training (34 per cent vs. non-racialized groups). Job attainment showed small differences: 20 per cent of newcomers secured a trades job compared with 23 per cent of non-newcomers, and 17 per cent of racialized respondents secured a job compared with 25 per cent of non-racialized respondents.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous respondents also completed exploration (89 per cent), outreach (82 per cent), job-related actions (87 per cent), and job attainment (21 per cent) at nearly identical levels. However, Indigenous respondents were more likely to start trades training (50

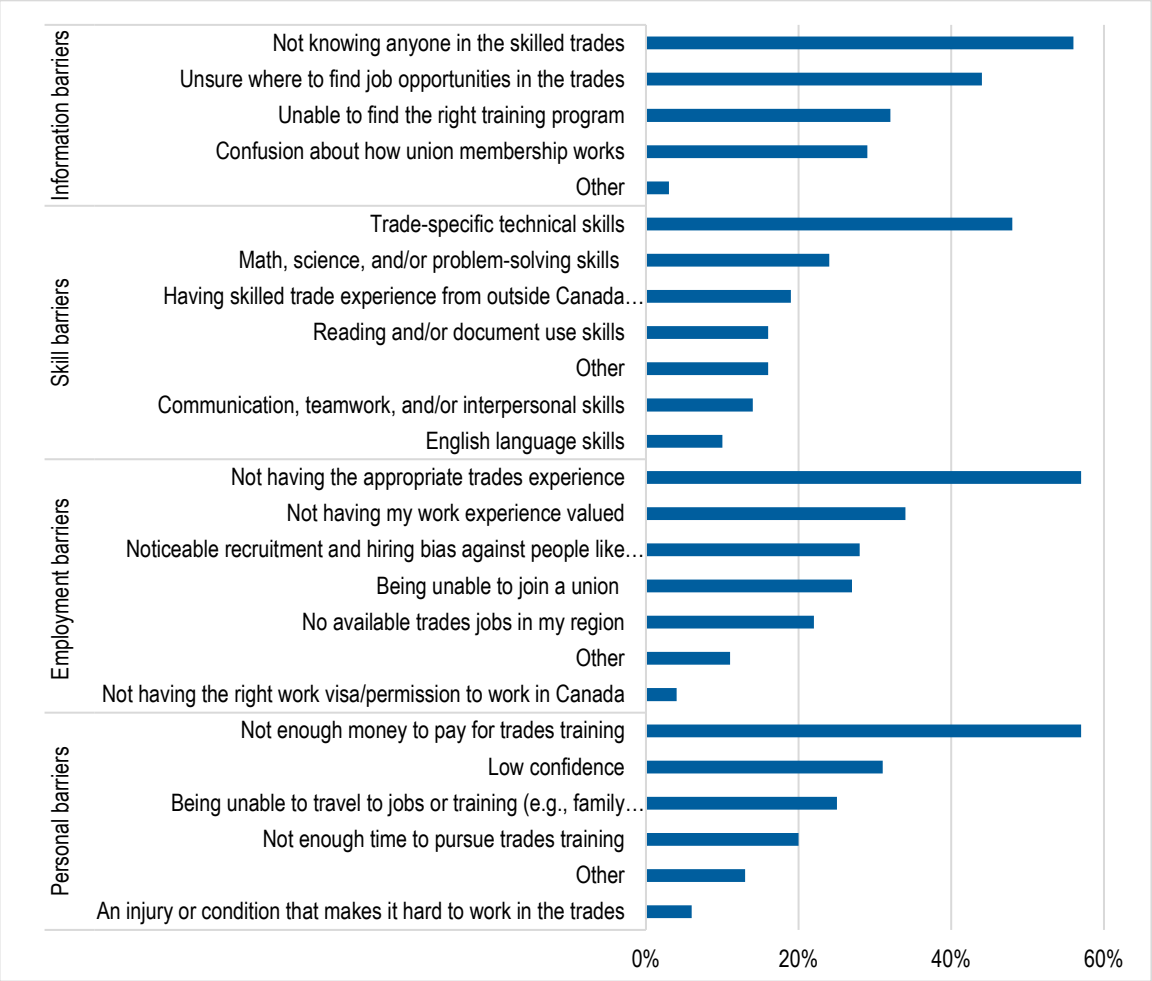
per cent vs. 37 per cent) and more likely to start any training overall (68 per cent vs. 55 per cent).

These patterns suggest that while many groups engaged similarly in early exploration and outreach activities, additional factors—such as the supports individuals received and the barriers they faced, which were explored through survey questions—could influence whether they ultimately started trades training or secure trades employment.

## Barriers users faced

Survey respondents were asked to indicate what types of barriers/challenges, grouped by information, skill and employment, they faced when seeking a job in the construction trades, results that are shown in Figure 8.

**Figure 8 Overview of Barriers Reported by Survey Respondents**



In terms of information barriers, the majority of respondents identified not knowing anyone in the skilled trades as a barrier, with 56 per cent reporting this challenge. Another 44 per cent said they were unsure where to find job opportunities in the trades, and 32 per cent were unable to find the right training program. Confusion about how union membership works affected 29 per cent of respondents, while 3 per cent identified other barriers.

In terms of skill barriers, nearly half of respondents (48 per cent) reported needing trade-specific technical skills, while 24 per cent identified gaps in math, science, or problem-solving skills. Nineteen per cent said they required support in having skilled trade experience from outside Canada recognized. Reading or document-use skills and "other" skill needs were each noted by 16 per cent of respondents. In addition, 14 per cent reported needing stronger communication, teamwork, or interpersonal skills, and 10 per cent identified English language skills as an area for improvement.

More than half of respondents (57 per cent) reported that not having the appropriate trades experience was a barrier to securing employment. Another 34 per cent felt their work experience was not valued, and 28 per cent perceived noticeable recruitment or hiring bias against people like them, including bias related to gender, age, disability, or newcomer status. Being unable to join a union was identified by 27 per cent, while 22 per cent said there were no available trades jobs in their region. Eleven per cent cited other barriers, and 4 per cent reported not having the right work visa or permission to work in Canada.

Survey respondents also highlighted personal barriers. More than half of respondents (57 per cent) reported that not having enough money to pay for trades training was a major personal barrier. Low confidence affected 31 per cent, while 25 per cent said they were unable to travel to jobs or training because of factors such as family commitments or lack of transportation. Another 20 per cent indicated they did not have enough time to pursue trades training. Thirteen per cent identified other personal barriers, and 6 per cent reported an injury or condition that made it difficult to work in the trades.

# APPENDIX C: SKILLED TRADES OPPORTUNITIES SURVEY

## About the Skilled Trades Opportunities and Support Survey

**Help us make career resources better for you.**
We're inviting you to take part in a short survey (about 7-10 minutes) to help us understand what supports and resources users need to:

- Learn about different trades
- Find a job in construction
- Join a trades union

Your feedback will help SkillPlan and Canada's Building Trades Unions (CBTU) design services that are useful, supportive, and accessible.

**Your privacy is protected.**

- Only SRDC, our independent research partner, will see your survey responses (learn more at www.srdc.org).
- Information may be combined with other SkillPlan or CBTU data, but no one will ever be able to identify you personally.
- Reports created from this survey are for accountability and evaluation purposes only.

**Answering the survey is voluntary.**

- It will not affect your access to SkillPlan or CBTU programs or services.
- You may skip questions or stop anytime.

If you have questions about the survey, contact Ashley Pullman at apullman@srdc.org.

## CONSENT

**Do you want to proceed with the survey?**

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

# Tell us a bit about yourself

Please enter your first name_____
Please enter your last name_____
Please provide the email address where you received this survey _____

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| **In which province or territory do you currently live?** | ☐ Newfoundland<br>☐ PEI<br>☐ Nova Scotia<br>☐ New Brunswick<br>☐ Quebec<br>☐ Ontario<br>☐ Manitoba<br>☐ Saskatchewan<br>☐ Alberta<br>☐ British Columbia<br>☐ Yukon, Northwest Territories or Nunavut<br>☐ Outside of Canada (screened out)<br>☐ Other, please specify: _____<br>☐ Don't know/No response |
| **Are you currently in the skilled trades, either working or in training?** | ☐ Yes, I am working in the trades<br>☐ Yes, I am in trades training (e.g., pre-apprenticeship, union training)<br>☐ Yes, I am working and training in the trades<br>☐ No, but I am interested in entering the trades<br>☐ No, and I am interested in another field<br>☐ Don't know/No response |
| **If answer 2, 4, or 5 in previous question → ask**<br>**Do you have experience working in the construction trades?** (Either in Canada or outside of Canada) | ☐ Yes<br>☐ No<br>☐ Don't know/No response |
| **What is your current or most recent training level in the construction trades?** (Either in Canada or outside of Canada) | ☐ I have no prior training<br>☐ Pre-apprentice<br>☐ Apprentice level 1<br>☐ Apprentice level 2<br>☐ Apprentice level 3<br>☐ Apprentice level 4<br>☐ Apprentice level 5<br>☐ I am a journeyperson<br>☐ Other, please specify: _____<br>☐ Don't know/no response |
| **What construction trade are you interested or currently working in?** | ☐ I haven't chosen a trade<br>☐ Asphalt Technician<br>☐ Boilermaker |

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| | ☐ Carpenter<br>☐ Cement Mason<br>☐ Crane Operator<br>☐ Electrician<br>☐ Finish Trades Worker<br>☐ Glazier<br>☐ Heavy Equipment Operator<br>☐ Insulator<br>☐ Ironworker<br>☐ Labourer / Construction Craft Worker<br>☐ Millwright<br>☐ Plumber and/or Pipefitter<br>☐ Refrigeration<br>☐ Sheet Metal<br>☐ Sprinkler fitting<br>☐ Welder<br>☐ Other, please specify:_____<br>☐ Don't know/No response |

## Experiences with outreach

**We're interested in what happened after you signed up to SkillPlan's Build Your Skills Learning Hub or completed a Connect to Union form and requested to receive more information about trades training and union opportunities.**

**By completing one of these forms, you may have requested outreach to connect you with available construction jobs or training opportunities through a local union.**

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| **Thinking back to when you registered for the Learning Hub**, what were the main reasons you wanted to receive more information about trades training and union opportunities?<br><br>*Select all that apply* | ☐ I was exploring different trades career options<br>☐ I was exploring training in the trades<br>☐ I wanted to learn more about trades union membership<br>☐ I needed help joining a trades union<br>☐ I was looking *for a job in the trades*<br>☐ I was looking for *any job*<br>☐ I was looking specifically for a unionized trades job<br>☐ I already had a job, but was looking for a better job through a trades union<br>☐ Other, please specify: _____<br>☐ Don't know/No response |

**Thinking back, what were the main reasons you wanted to receive more information about trades training and employment opportunities? (*Select all that apply*.)**

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| **Did you receive any of the following support?**<br>*Please select all that apply.* | ☐ Yes, I received a follow-up email<br>☐ Yes, I received a follow-up phone call or voice message<br>☐ Yes, I received support from a friend, family member, or someone in my community<br>☐ No, I wanted support but did not received it<br>☐ No, I did not want any support<br>☐ Other, please specify: _____<br>☐ Don't know/No response |
| **How often did you communicate with the person who contacted you?** This could be via phone, text or email.<br>See if selected 1 or 2 in previous question | ☐ Once<br>☐ Multiple times within a week or two<br>☐ Multiple times within a month<br>☐ Multiple times over several months<br>☐ Don't know/No response |
| **Are you still receiving this support?**<br>See if selected 1 or 2 in previous question | ☐ Yes<br>☐ No<br>☐ Don't know/No response |
| **Why are you no longer receiving support?**<br>See if selected "no" in previous question | ☐ I no longer need support<br>☐ The support did not meet my needs<br>☐ I have not heard back<br>☐ Other, please specify: _____<br>☐ Don't know/No response |

**Did you receive any of the following supports?** See if selected 1 or 2 in question above

| | Yes | No | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|
| Trades career coaching | | | |
| Trades training navigation | | | |
| Skills development guidance | | | |
| Union membership information | | | |
| Trades requirement advice (e.g., work permits, required education/courses) | | | |
| Resume assistance | | | |
| Other, please specify | | | |

**How satisfied were you with the support(s) you received?** Only show if "yes" responses from previous question

| | Very dissatisfied | Dissatisfied | Neutral | Satisfied | Very satisfied | No response |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trades career coaching | | | | | | |
| Trades training navigation | | | | | | |
| Skills development guidance | | | | | | |
| Union membership information | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Trades requirement advice (e.g., work permits, required education/courses) | | | | | | |
| Resume assistance | | | | | | |
| Other | | | | | | |

# Actions taken since signing up for the Learning Hub

**Next, we'd like to hear about what trades-related activities you've been involved in since signing up.**

**Since signing up for the Learning Hub, have you done the following:**

| | Yes | No | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|
| Explored trades-related websites | | | |
| Learned more about trades unions | | | |
| Learned about trades-related grants, funding, and financial support | | | |
| Found an organization supporting specific groups in the trades (e.g., women, Indigenous persons, newcomers/immigrants) | | | |
| Other, please specify: _____ | | | |

**Since signing up for the Learning Hub, who have you communicated with to learn more about skilled trades (via text, email, phone, conversation, etc.):**

| | Yes | No | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|
| Friends, family, and/or teachers | | | |
| Someone currently working (or has worked) in the trades | | | |
| A provincial or national building trades council rep (for example, Canada's Building Trades Unions or the New Brunswick Building Trades Council) | | | |
| A trades union rep | | | |
| Trades training centre or college rep | | | |
| A provincial apprenticeship or skilled trades organization (for example, Skilled Trades BC or Ontario) | | | |
| A trades organization supporting specific groups (e.g., women, Indigenous persons, racialized people, persons with disabilities) | | | |
| Other, please specify: _____ | | | |

**Since signing up for the Learning Hub, have you *started* the following training or skill development?**

| | Yes | No | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|
| A course on the Build Your Skills Learning Hub | | | |
| Pre-apprenticeship training with a union | | | |
| Pre-apprenticeship training with a non-union training organization | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Apprenticeship training with a union | | | |
| Apprenticeship training in a non-union workplace | | | |
| Trades training at a college | | | |
| Other, please specify: _____ | | | |

**Since signing up for the Learning Hub, have you done any of the following job activities?**

| | Yes | No | N/A |
|---|---|---|---|
| Looked for a job in the trades | | | |
| Created or updated a resume/CV | | | |
| Applied for a job | | | |
| Applied to a union | | | |
| Joined a trades union waiting list | | | |
| Secured a unionized trades job | | | |
| Secured a non-unionized trade job | | | |
| Other, please specify: _____ | | | |

## Barriers and challenges

**Next, we'll ask about any challenges you've faced along the way. Click on the options below so we can better understand and address common barriers.**

**Did you experience any of the following barriers when seeking a job in the construction trades? Select all that apply.**

**I experienced the following *information barriers….***

□ not knowing anyone in the skilled trades
□ confusion about how union membership works
□ unable to find the right training program
□ unsure where to find job opportunities in the trades
□ other information barrier, please specify: _____

**I experienced the following *skill barriers….***

□ Math, science, and/or problem-solving skills
□ Reading and/or document use skills
□ Trade-specific technical skills
□ English language skills
□ Having skilled trade experience from outside Canada recognized
□ Other skill, please specify: _____

**I experienced the following *job barriers….***

□ Not having my work experience valued
□ Not having the appropriate trades experience
□ No available trades jobs in my region

□ Being unable to join a union
□ Noticeable recruitment and hiring bias against people like me (for example, due to gender, race, age, disability, newcomers/immigrants, Indigenous Peoples)
□ Not having the right work visa/permission to work in Canada
□ Other job barrier, please specify: _____

**I experienced the following *personal barriers….***
□ Being unable to travel to jobs or training (e.g. family commitments, no car)
□ An injury or condition that makes it hard to work in the trades
□ Low confidence
□ Not enough time to pursue trades training
□ Not enough money to pay for trades training
□ Other personal barrier, please specify: _____

## Demographics

**Finally, we would like to ask a few final questions about you. These questions help us better understand who we are serving so we can align our resources, tailor our programs, and build supports that meet the needs of our participants. You may skip any question you prefer. Any answers you provide will be kept secure and used only to improve our services and supports.**

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| **What is your gender identity?** | ☐ Male<br>☐ Female<br>☐ Non-binary<br>☐ Prefer to self-describe: _____<br>☐ Don't know/No response |
| **What is your age?** | ☐ Under 18 years old<br>☐ 18 to 24<br>☐ 25 to 29<br>☐ 30 to 44<br>☐ 45 to 54<br>☐ 55 to 64<br>☐ 65 or above<br>☐ Don't know/No response |
| **Do you self-identify as an Indigenous person?** | ☐ Yes<br>☐ No<br>☐ Don't know/No response |
| **Were you born in Canada?** | ☐ Yes<br>☐ No<br>☐ Prefer not to say |
| **How long have you been living in Canada?**<br>Show if "no" in previous question | ☐ Less than 2 years<br>☐ 2 to 5 years<br>☐ More than 5 years |

| Question | Response |
|---|---|
| | ☐ Don't know/No response |
| **Do you identify as part of a racialized group** | ☐ Yes<br>☐ No<br>☐ Prefer not to say |
| **Do you have any of the following conditions?**<br>*Select all that apply* | ☐ Difficulty seeing (even when wearing glasses or contact lenses)<br>☐ Difficulty hearing (even when using a hearing aid)<br>☐ Difficulty walking, using stairs, using your hands or fingers, or doing other physical activities<br>☐ Difficulty learning, remembering or concentrating<br>☐ Emotional, psychological or mental health conditions (e.g., anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, substance abuse, anorexia)<br>☐ Other health problem or long-term condition that has lasted six months or more<br>☐ Other, please specify:_____<br>☐ None of the above<br>☐ Prefer not to say |
| **What is the highest level of education you have completed?** | ☐ High school diploma (or equivalent)<br>☐ Postsecondary certificate<br>☐ Postsecondary diploma<br>☐ Apprenticeship<br>☐ Bachelor's degree<br>☐ A master's degree or higher<br>☐ Other, please specify: _____<br>☐ Don't know/No response |

## Final comments

**Do you want to be contacted by an apprentice coordinator to receive more information about the construction trades?**

- ☐ Yes, please use this email address or phone number: _____
- ☐ No, not at this time

**Finally, please provide us with any comments that you have about skilled trades opportunities and support overall** (optional)**:** _____

**Thank you for completing the survey!**

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