SCALE HOSPITALITY GROUP

SCALE LEARNING LAB

END OF PROJECT REPORT | 26 November 2024

Future Skills Centre · Centre des Compétences futures

Canada

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1 PRELIMINARY PROJECT SYNOPSIS

1.1 Introductory Project Note

Over the summer of 2021, Scale Hospitality Group (Scale) and Future Skills Centre (FSC) engaged in discussions on the labour market conditions in the hospitality sector, more particularly the restaurant sector. As the sector came out of the pandemic in 2020, it was decimated not only from an operational and financial perspective, but more critically aggravated an already existing talent shortage. As the sector emerged from the pandemic, a significant level of talent from the sector made a transition to other sectors and did not return following the regulated re-opening of the sector and only exacerbated the talent shortage.

To support the need of talent at Scale's 20 plus restaurants, along with its close industry partners, Scale was provided funding through the Skills Development Fund at the Ontario Ministry of Labour, Industry, Training and Skills Development to build industry-led and designed training programs with a focus on asynchronous programs. These programs had a focus on building a new talent pipeline for the sector, with a focus on community participation from underserved and underrepresented communities. The program in its first year was a success, and funding was also provided for a second year ending in March 2024. An application was submitted to extend to a third with a focus on participation from outside the Greater Toronto Area.

In parallel, Scale saw a significant opportunity to support the sector through the development of the Scale Learning Lab as an industry-led and designed centre to future-proof the sector with the next generation of talent. The intent of the Lab is a centre of innovation focused on the development of talent and their acquisition of the technical, soft skills and career pathwaying to be prepared for the future of hospitality sector.

Emanating from a collaborative program design process was a project with three core programmatic markers. First, to address the critical shortage of talent through an innovative technology-focused training centre with live broadcasting of rapid workforce training programs accessible to participants Canada-wide in parallel to industry-led and designed asynchronous training programs. Second, to engage with industry leaders to understand and formulate what is needed to train, retain and attract the next set of talent to meet sectoral needs that can be shared and replicated to future-proof the sector. Third, using data and a Labour Market Information that provides markers of qualitative and quantitative to support future skill identification, learner experiences, and career pathwaying.

Scale Hospitality Group is grateful for the support of the Future Skills Centre in its funding of this project.

1.2 Executive Summary

In embarking on the project, SLL was built on the premise that the talent shortage in this sector can no longer be seen as a short-term phenomenon or cycle but is structural in nature, and that the industry needs to play a key role in providing the directional input to course correct for the long-term with innovative industry-led solutions focused on building the talent pipeline to operate at full capacity.

Problem Identification

The hospitality sector in Canada is facing a critical and structural talent shortage, which has moved beyond the realm of cyclical fluctuations to become a deep-seated challenge. This shortage hampers the industry's ability to operate at full capacity and impedes long-term growth. Recognizing that traditional stop-gap solutions are insufficient, there is a clear need for a strategic, industry-led approach to cultivate a robust talent pipeline that is equipped to meet both current and future demands.

Forecasting Future Trends

With the hospitality industry's anticipated Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 3.45% from 2024 to 2029 significantly outperforming the national GDP growth, the sector is poised for substantial expansion. This growth is powered by increases in disposable income that boost travel and leisure spending, a thriving tourism landscape requiring sustained infrastructure investment, and rapid technological advancements that are reshaping service delivery. The sector's growth from USD 22.86 billion in 2024 to USD 27.08 billion by 2029 necessitates a workforce that is agile, skilled, and technologically savvy.

The Scale Learning Lab (SLL) Solution

The SLL has emerged as a pioneering response to the hospitality sector's systemic talent challenges. It has implemented an innovative training model that integrates real-world operational experiences within an educational framework. The SLL Training Kitchen, which supports over 20 restaurants in the city's entertainment sector, is central to this approach, offering trainees hands-on experience in both Front of House (FOH) and Back of House (BOH) roles. This is complemented by an interactive live broadcast system that enables dynamic, technology-driven learning across various platforms, from reservation and ordering systems to financial management. The Lab's commitment to a hybrid training model—melding asynchronous with in-person instruction—addresses the sector's need for rapid workforce development, increasing access to training, and providing a pathway to economic mobility for those traditionally marginalized from such opportunities.

Strategic Recommendations for Sustained Industry Growth

To ensure the long-term vitality and competitiveness of the hospitality sector, the following strategic recommendations are put forward, grounded in the SLL's existing and expanding capabilities:

1. **Scale Training Accessibility**: The SLL will extend its innovative training methods to meet the growing demand for skilled labor, especially during peak hiring seasons, aligning with the industry's operational rhythms.

2. **Advance Technological Training**: In anticipation of the increasing role of technology in hospitality, the SLL will continue to embed advanced digital tools into its curriculum, ensuring that the workforce remains at the forefront of industry advancements.

3. **Deepen Industry Engagement**: By reinforcing its collaborative foundation, the SLL will ensure that training programs are responsive to the real-time needs of the industry, integrating insights directly from sector leaders.

4. **Enhance Community Partnerships**: The SLL will strengthen its engagement with community groups to enhance program reach, targeting those who have faced barriers to entry in the hospitality sector, and empowering them with the necessary skills and certifications.

5. **Responsive Market Alignment**: Through ongoing market assessments, the SLL will adapt its training programs to fill immediate and evolving talent gaps, ensuring that the sector is well-equipped to navigate and capitalize on market trends.

In embracing these recommendations, the SLL not only aims to address the immediate challenges of talent scarcity but also to position the Canadian hospitality sector as a leading economic force, both now and in the years to come.

2 PROJECT LEADERSHIP

The project team at the Scale Learning Lab (SLL) is comprised of seasoned leaders in the Hospitality Sector including program management, financial leadership, culinary, and operations.

Working collaboratively, the SLL Team is not only focused on the development and continuous improvement of the programs based on feedback from Scale's own 20 plus restaurants, but also with its industry partners that are engaged. The team meets weekly to review progress, inputs from industry partners, community, and predictions on what the upcoming labour challenges are to be considered.

2.1 Core Team of the Scale Learning Lab

The SLL leadership team is a diverse and multi-disciplinary team comprised the organization's leadership across operations, culinary, and management as follows:

1. Hanif Harji CEO and Founder
2. Terry Tsianos, CEO and Founder
3. Harry Feldman, VP Operations
4. Ted Corrado, Executive Corporate Chef
5. Erin Slade, VP Training and Development
6. Nicolette Tsianos, Director Business Development (data analysis)
7. Marcey Linton, Manager Training and Development
8. Stephanie Jarvis, Director Marketing
9. Karim Rahemtulla, Executive Advisor to the CEOs

2.2 Coalition of Industry Stewards

SLL has engaged with a broad set of industry leaders who lead restaurants that vary from multi-units of one brand to multiple brands and genres in the sector. The assembly of leaders are operators from Toronto to Ontario to National, and cover a wide range of genres from continental to Italian, Middle Eastern, Spanish, Caribbean, Asian, steak houses, and others. They also range from family service to high-end service.

In gauging the sector, the variety and form of service and audiences has supported the design and build of the program as well as forming an understanding of the what the future needs for the sector are.

3 SECTOR ANALYSIS AND STRATEGIC FORESIGHT

SETSI was contracted in February 2023 to provide a Labour Market Information Study as part of this project. SETSI works with Black and underrepresented communities, their perspectives would be important in further understanding how best to engage and support these communities in building a sustainable and diverse workforce in the sector.

3.1 Labour Market Analysis for Hospitality Sector

3.1.1.1 EMPLOYMENT LANDSCAPE OVERVIEW

The hospitality sector is renowned for its dynamic labor market, characterized by a vast spectrum of roles, from front-of-house staff to hotel management. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the sector faced challenges including high turnover rates and a growing demand for skilled labor. The pandemic intensified these issues, resulting in a substantial outflow of talent as individuals sought stability in other sectors.

As restaurants and hotels began to reopen, the labor market did not snap back to its pre-pandemic state. Many workers did not return, leading to a pronounced labor shortage. According to a labor market information study, there was an 18 per cent decline in the number of workers in the service sector between 2020 and 2022. This includes a 22 per cent decline among 18 to 24-year-olds and a drop of 15 per cent among 25 to 34-year-olds. This shift away from the hospitality sector worsened the pre-existing talent deficit. Scale Learning Lab (SLL), in response, focused on developing industry-led training programs that addressed these gaps. They targeted community participation, particularly from underserved and underrepresented communities, to cultivate a new talent pipeline.

SLL's innovative approach included the creation of asynchronous training programs to provide the flexibility required by those unable to commit to traditional schedules. This "digital-first" methodology enabled participants to engage with training programs on their terms, increasing accessibility and inclusivity. Such measures were critical in addressing the labor market's needs, as they expanded the pool of potential employees by removing barriers to entry.

The live broadcasting of rapid workforce training programs emerged as a novel solution to bridge the geographic divide, making professional development opportunities accessible to a nationwide audience. SLL's programs were purpose-built to address the unique needs of the hospitality sector, combining real-world experience with technical and soft skills development.

Despite these initiatives, the labor market remains tight, with Statistics Canada reporting a vacancy rate of 5.7% in the accommodation and food services sector as of the third quarter of 2023. This

indicates a significant number of unfilled positions, signaling that while progress has been made, the sector still grapples with attracting and retaining talent.

3.1.1.2 CHALLENGES FACING THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR:

The hospitality sector has faced a multitude of challenges, with the COVID-19 pandemic bringing unprecedented stress to an already strained system. The abrupt halt in global travel and local dining experiences had a ripple effect, causing a severe reduction in revenue and a subsequent contraction of the workforce.

Post-pandemic, the sector was not only tasked with recovery but also with adaptation to the new normal. Consumer behavior has shifted, with a greater emphasis on digital interaction, contactless services, and heightened expectations for cleanliness and safety. This shift necessitates an evolution in the skill sets required from the workforce, leaning more towards digital literacy and enhanced customer service capabilities and increased focus on customer experience.

Another significant challenge is the sector's image as a career destination. The perception of hospitality jobs as transient or supplementary rather than as viable long-term careers, contributes to the ongoing talent shortage. The SLL's focus on creating career pathways and the acquisition of soft skills aims to shift this perception by highlighting growth opportunities within the sector.

SLL's engagement with industry leaders has spotlighted the need for agility in responding to market shifts and talent needs. Seasonal fluctuations, for example, require a workforce that can adapt to varying demands, emphasizing the need for a robust and flexible training infrastructure.

Furthermore, the push towards technological integration in operations presents both a challenge and an opportunity. While technology can streamline processes and improve efficiency, it also demands a workforce proficient in new systems and tools. This digital transformation requires significant upskilling of current employees, alongside a strategic approach to recruit tech-savvy newcomers.

The hospitality sector is at a crossroads, facing challenges that include adapting to post-pandemic consumer expectations, addressing the labor shortage, and integrating technology into every facet of operations. Programs like those offered by the SLL are pivotal in surmounting these challenges, ensuring that the sector can not only recover but also thrive in the years to come.

3.1.1.3 IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON LABOUR DYNAMICS

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a transformative impact on labor dynamics within the hospitality sector. The Labour market report outlines how the reduction in tourism and forced closures led to a significant loss of jobs, with many workers transitioning to other sectors or unable to return to their

previous roles. This has resulted in acute labor shortages, particularly in roles that require specialized skills or offer customer-facing services.

The pandemic has also accelerated the adoption of digital technologies, leading to a greater need for tech-savvy workers. SLL's integration of live broadcast systems and online training platforms are responses to this shift, providing remote and flexible learning options that align with the sector's emergent needs. These systems have the potential to mitigate some of the pandemic's negative impacts by offering alternative routes to employment and skill development.

Moreover, in our dialogues with partners and stakeholders, a pivotal area has emerged: tackling the wide-ranging socioeconomic factors that shape the workforce landscape. The importance for just transitions has gained traction, highlighting the necessity for fair access to training opportunities and acknowledging the distinct hurdles encountered by underrepresented communities. By concentrating on these critical issues, the industry can pave the way for a recovery that is not only inclusive but also sustainable.

3.1.1.4 STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING LABOUR MARKET CHALLENGES

The hospitality sector's labor market challenges necessitate a multi-faceted strategy to address the complex nature of the issues at hand. First, investment in training and development is paramount. The SLL, with its innovative training kitchen and real-world operational commissary, offers an unprecedented training environment that combines both technical skills and the 'communication language' of hospitality. The SLL's training programs transcend traditional models by offering a blend of asynchronous and synchronous, in-person and live broadcasting sessions. This blend not only increases access and participation but also caters to the real-time needs of the sector, ensuring that the talent is job-ready from day one.

Moreover, the SLL is championing innovative employment strategies that aim to revitalize the sector's image as a career destination. By showcasing clear career pathways and establishing industry partnerships, the SLL promotes hospitality as a field ripe with opportunities for growth and advancement. The Lab's engagement with community groups and open access to programs breaks down barriers to entry, fostering economic mobility and a richer talent pool from which the industry can draw.

Leveraging technology for operational efficiency is another strategic focus area. The SLL's integration of reservation, ordering, and financial systems into its training programs ensures that graduates are proficient in the latest technology driving the industry. This proficiency is not only attractive to employers seeking to modernize their operations, but also positions the graduates at the forefront of the hospitality sector's evolving landscape.

3.1.1.5 DIVERSITY IN THE SECTOR

Over the past few years diversity has increased as a result to new sector entrants and on-going sector engagement with diverse communities. The need for diversity is critical to ensure continued talent and talent pipeline growth. The sector is diverse, but the majority of diverse employees are entry-level positions in both the Back and Front of House. While diversity is increasing in Back of House roles, there is limited diversity in Front of House Management and a focus of the sector is to recruit and/or upskill to this level.

Increasing diversity in the sector is focus of the SLL by working with underrepresented and marginalized communities by providing accessible programs in working deeply with community partners. Increasing diversity not only improves talent for the sector, but also builds economic resilience and empowerment in these communities through meaning work and living salaries.

3.2   Future Proofing the Sector

3.2.1.1   MARKET INSIGHTS AND MARKET DRIVERS

© Statista 2024
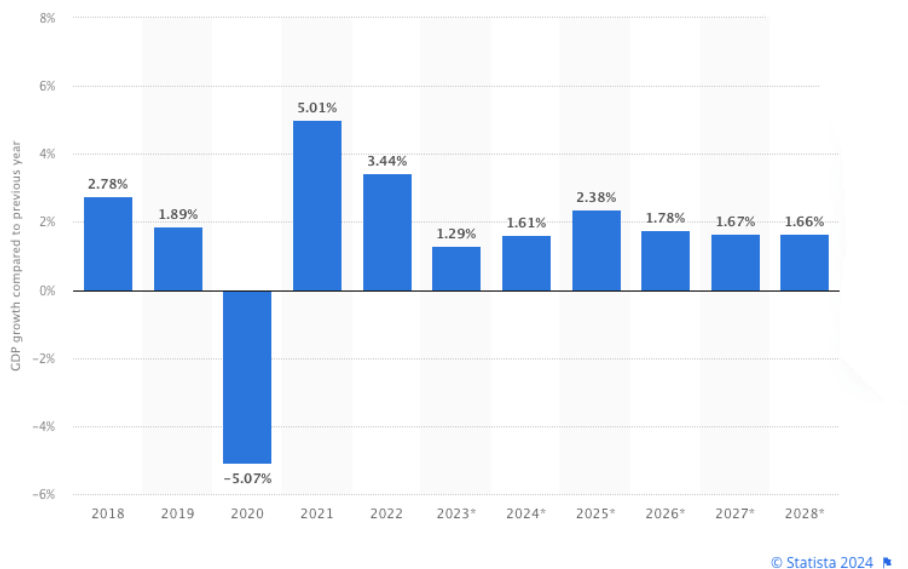
The hospitality sector in Canada stands as a beacon of growth amidst the broader economic landscape. With the national GDP projected to grow by a modest 1.25% to 1.6% annually between 2023 and 2027, the hospitality industry outshines with an expected Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 3.45% over the years 2024 to 2029. This indicates that the hospitality industry is not only growing but doing so at more than double the rate of the country's broader economic growth. This contrast in growth rates is indicative of the sector's resilience and also underscores its potential as a key driver of economic development.

Hospitality Industry in Canada
Market Size in USD Billion
CAGR 3.45%

USD 27.08 B
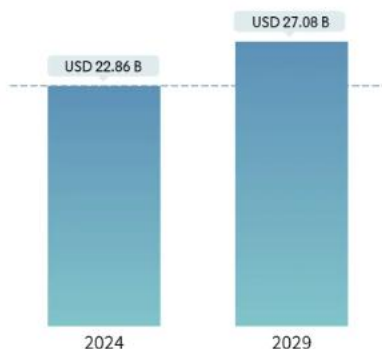
USD 22.86 B

2024   2029

Study Period	2020 - 2029
Base Year For Estimation	2023
Market Size (2024)	USD 22.86 Billion
Market Size (2029)	USD 27.08 Billion
CAGR (2024 - 2029)	3.45 %
Market Concentration	Medium

Major Players

ACCOR HOTELS   Marriott INTERNATIONAL

Hilton   BW | Best Western   HYATT

3.2.1.2 DRIVING FORCES BEHIND THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR'S GROWTH

This exceptional performance can be attributed to several key driving forces:

DRIVER   RESTRAINT

HIGH IMPACT

GROWTH IN TOURISM

RISING DISPOSABLE INCOME

INCREASING INVESTMENTS IN INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENTS

CHANGING CONSUMER DEMANDS

RISING OPERATIONAL COSTS

LOW IMPACT

SHORT TERM   LONG TERM
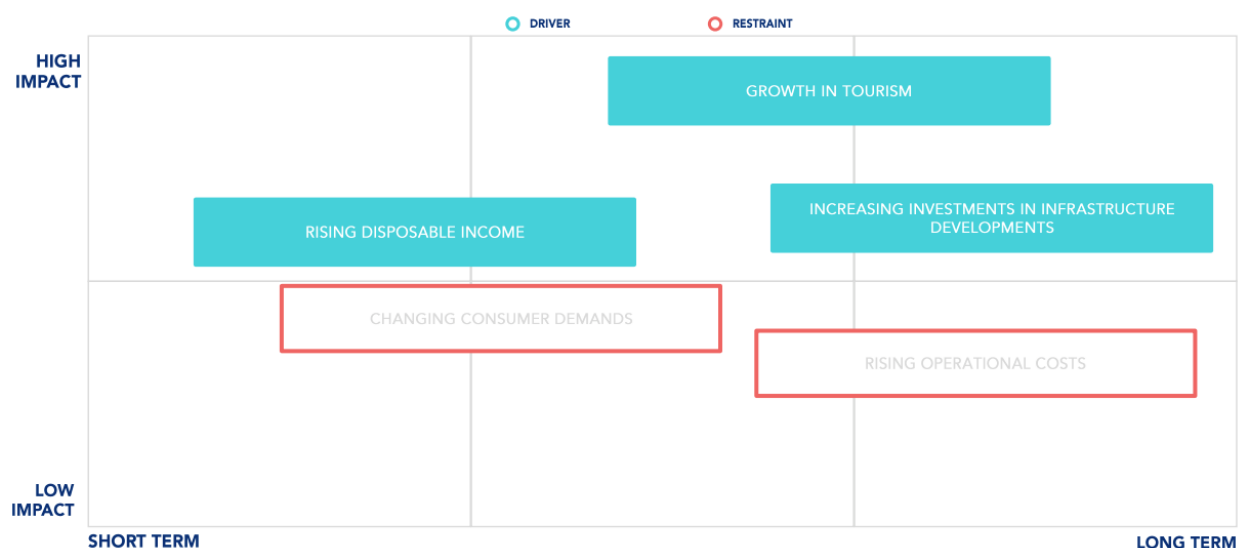
Economic Drivers: The rise in disposable income, despite economic headwinds like high-interest rates, plays a crucial role in the hospitality sector's growth. This income increase allows for more discretionary spending, particularly on travel and leisure, which directly benefits the hospitality industry. With the sector's size expected to swell from USD 22.86 billion in 2024 to USD 27.08 billion by 2029, there is a clear indication of the industry's robust health and its magnetic pull for consumer spending.

Tourism Trends: Canada's tourism sector is experiencing a renaissance, with ongoing growth bolstered by both natural and urban attractions. The burgeoning tourism industry not only fuels hospitality directly but also necessitates continual investments in infrastructure and services, ensuring the sector remains equipped to handle an ever-increasing volume of visitors.

Technological Innovation: The sector's growth is further augmented by significant advancements in technology, which enhance operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. The application of smart technology in hospitality management is revolutionizing service delivery, enabling providers to meet the high standards expected by modern travelers.

3.2.1.3   MARKET INSIGHTS:

A deeper dive into market data reveals that the interplay of these forces is shaping a sector that is becoming increasingly integral to Canada's economic fabric:

Comparative Growth Analysis:

The hospitality sector's growth far outpaces the national GDP, underscoring its importance as an economic driver. The sector's resilience is evident in its ability to maintain a consistent growth rate, even as other sectors face economic pressures.

Consumer Behaviour:

Changing consumer demands are prompting the hospitality industry to adopt more personalized and experience-driven services. The shift towards unique and customized travel experiences is a response to the evolving market, with the industry's flexibility acting as a significant growth catalyst.

Operational and Financial Challenges:

The industry's ability to navigate rising operational costs is noteworthy. Strategic investments in energy-saving and cost-cutting measures are essential for sustaining profitability. The industry's projected increase in size signifies its ability to overcome these financial challenges through innovation and adaptability.

Conclusion and the Case for Investment

The necessity for investment in the Canadian hospitality sector is clear. Given its disproportionate contribution to economic growth, a well-rounded approach to investment in skills, infrastructure, and technology is paramount:

3.2.1.4 SKILLS INVESTMENT:

The hospitality sector's dependence on a skilled workforce cannot be overstressed. Investment in developing a skilled labor force that can provide exceptional service is critical for maintaining the sector's competitive edge.

Infrastructure Development:

Strategic infrastructure investment is key to supporting the expected increase in tourism and the corresponding growth in the hospitality market. This includes not only physical infrastructure like hotels and transportation, but also digital infrastructure that supports the seamless integration of technology in hospitality services.

Technological Advancements:

Finally, technology investment stands out as a cornerstone for future-proofing the sector. The use of data analytics, artificial intelligence, and other digital tools can streamline operations, reduce costs, and create personalized experiences for guests.

In conclusion, with the hospitality sector's market size expected to grow by nearly USD 5 billion over five years, the case for investment is compelling. Not only is such investment poised to yield high returns, but it is also crucial for catalyzing broader economic growth. By investing in the hospitality sector, stakeholders can leverage the interrelated trends of rising income, tourism growth, and technological innovation to drive Canada's economic expansion. The current trajectory suggests that strategic investments in the hospitality sector are not just advantageous but essential for securing Canada's economic future.

3.2.1.5 SKILL DEVELOPMENT TRENDS AND INDUSTRY RESPONSE

The hospitality sector's labor market is evolving under the influence of several significant trends. First, there has been a notable shift towards part-time and gig work, offering both challenges and opportunities for workers and employers alike. The Scale Learning Lab (SLL) initiative is to address this shift which also necessitates a more flexible approach to employment contracts and benefits, as well as a re-evaluation of traditional work arrangements. There's a growing emphasis on the development of digital skills across the workforce, as technology becomes increasingly integral to operations within the sector.

Second, there is a trend toward diversification within the hospitality workforce. The SLL research indicates that tapping into underrepresented demographics can enrich the talent pool, particularly when it comes to leadership roles within the sector. By creating inclusive pathways for advancement

and recognizing the varied contributions of a diverse workforce, the sector can better meet the challenges of a competitive global market.

Lastly, there's a trend towards more strategic recruitment and retention efforts. The SLL's focus on developing partnerships with educational institutions and leveraging digital platforms for training underscores the industry's need to build a more resilient and adaptable workforce. This includes addressing the sector's high turnover rates through better work-life balance and building new career advancement opportunities.

3.2.1.6 CULTIVATING NEW TALENT AND DIVERSE WORKFORCE

The vitality of the hospitality sector hinges on its ability to innovate, adapt, and embrace diversity at every level. As the industry confronts high turnover rates and an evolving labor market, there is a critical need to cultivate new talent and foster a diverse workforce.

Embracing Diversity as an Economic Imperative

- **Inclusivity in Leadership and Operations**
  The Canadian hospitality sector must recognize the richness that a diverse talent pool brings to the industry. With demographic shifts and the globalization of travel, having a workforce that reflects a spectrum of experiences is not just socially responsible, but also a business imperative. A diverse workforce can enhance creativity, improve decision-making, and reflect an international clientele's diverse needs. For instance, organizations that are more gender-diverse are 15% more likely to outperform their peers, and those that are ethnically diverse are 35% more likely to do the same.

- **Breaking Barriers to Entry**
  To this end, industry leaders must break down barriers that have historically kept people of color and other underrepresented groups from rising through the ranks. By creating clear, inclusive pathways for advancement and actively recruiting from these groups, the hospitality sector can tap into a wellspring of innovation and leadership potential.

Addressing the Talent Churn

- **Rethinking Recruitment and Retention**
  The hospitality industry is notorious for its high turnover rates, with some estimates placing annual turnover in the sector as high as 73.8%. This churn is not only costly but also indicative of a need for systemic change in employment practices. The industry must shift its mindset from viewing jobs as transient to creating careers with potential for growth and stability.

- **Balancing Flexibility with Stability**

While the gig economy has introduced flexibility, it is also associated with precarity. The sector must find a balance, offering flexible employment contracts while also providing workers with stability and a sense of security. This includes re-evaluating traditional work arrangements, offering competitive benefits, and fostering a workplace culture that values employee well-being.

Leveraging Technology and Partnerships for Skill Development

- **Digital Literacy as a Cornerstone of Modern Hospitality**
  With technology becoming an integral part of hospitality operations, digital literacy is now a fundamental skill for all employees. The need to develop digital skills across the workforce cannot be overstated. For example, a study found that 70% of employers anticipate that digital skills will be required for their jobs by 2030. Therefore, partnerships with educational institutions and leveraging digital platforms for training are crucial steps towards building a workforce that is equipped for the future.

- **Strategic Partnerships for Education and Advancement**
  The hospitality sector must cultivate strategic partnerships with educational institutions to ensure a pipeline of skilled workers. Initiatives like the Scale Learning Lab (SLL) exemplify the importance of such collaborations. By working together, the industry can address high turnover rates and build new career advancement opportunities that are appealing to a new generation of talent.

Creating a Culture of Growth and Opportunity

- **Professional Development and Career Pathways**
  Investing in professional development and clear career pathways is essential to attract and retain new talent. With approximately one in five Canadian youth unemployed or underemployed, according to a recent report, the hospitality sector has a unique opportunity to provide meaningful career options. Tailored training programs, mentorship, and continuous learning opportunities can help cultivate a workforce that is skilled, motivated, and loyal.

- **Work-Life Balance and Employee Engagement**
  To retain talent and reduce churn, employers must prioritize work-life balance and employee engagement. This approach not only improves job satisfaction but also enhances service quality, which is critical in a customer-centric industry like hospitality. Flexible scheduling, employee recognition programs, and opportunities for input on workplace decisions can contribute to a more engaged and stable workforce.

Synergizing Talent Development and Diversity

- **Holistic Diversity Strategies**

  It is not enough to simply hire a diverse workforce; the sector must implement holistic strategies that foster an inclusive environment where all employees can thrive. This means going beyond quotas and checklists to embed diversity and inclusion into the fabric of organizational culture. Active measures such as diversity training, bias prevention, and inclusive leadership are key to making diversity a lived value within the sector.

- **Measuring Progress with Data**

  To ensure that efforts in cultivating talent and diversity are effective, the hospitality sector must establish metrics for measuring progress. Tracking recruitment, retention, and promotion rates among underrepresented groups can provide valuable insights into areas of success and those requiring further attention.

The future of Canada's hospitality sector lies in its ability to embrace a workforce that is as diverse as the clientele it serves. By investing in the development of new talent and fostering a culture of inclusivity, the sector can address its high turnover rates and position itself for sustainable growth. Through strategic partnerships, continuous learning, and a commitment to diversity, the hospitality industry can build a resilient workforce ready to meet the challenges of a competitive global market. With the right investment in people, the hospitality sector can not only fill jobs, but can also enrich communities and drive economic success for all.

3.2.1.7 POLICY OPPORTUNITY AND EDUCATIONAL INVESTMENTS

The evolving landscape of the Canadian hospitality sector presents unique policy opportunities and underscores the need for educational investments. These twin pillars can serve to underpin the sector's growth and ensure its competitiveness on the global stage.

Policy Frameworks for Sustainable Growth

- **Enabling Entrepreneurship and Innovation**

  Governments can play a pivotal role by crafting policy frameworks that encourage entrepreneurship and innovation in hospitality. Tax incentives for small and medium-sized enterprises, streamlined licensing procedures, and support for startups in this sector can unleash a wave of innovation and service diversity.

- **Labor Laws and Employment Standards**

  Revisiting labor laws and employment standards can help address the high turnover rates in hospitality. Policies that promote fair wages, protect workers' rights, and encourage flexible yet stable employment arrangements are key to creating a more resilient workforce.

- **Immigration Policies to Augment Workforce**

Canada's immigration policies can be tailored to address labor shortages in hospitality. Fast-track visa programs for skilled hospitality workers and pathways for international students in hospitality programs to gain work experience in Canada can help fill critical gaps in the labor market.

Educational Investments for a Skilled Workforce

- **Curriculum Development and Technology Integration**

Investing in curriculum development that aligns with the current and future needs of the hospitality sector is crucial. This includes integrating technology into educational programs and ensuring that students graduate with the digital competencies necessary for modern hospitality operations.

- **Public-Private Partnerships in Education**

Collaborations between educational institutions and private hospitality enterprises can result in more targeted educational offerings. Such partnerships can provide students with a hands-on experience, while businesses benefit from a steady stream of qualified graduates who are industry-ready.

- **Lifelong Learning and Upskilling Initiatives**

Continuous learning opportunities should be a mainstay of the industry's approach to workforce development. Funding for upskilling programs can help current employees adapt to new technologies and service models, ensuring that the workforce evolves alongside the sector.

Leveraging Data for Targeted Educational Programs

- **Demand-Driven Education**

Educational programs must be responsive to the shifting demands of the hospitality sector. Data analytics can be employed to assess industry trends and forecast future skills requirements, ensuring that educational programs remain relevant and effective.

- **Educational Pathways for Underrepresented Groups**

Targeted educational pathways for underrepresented groups in hospitality, such as women, people of color, and indigenous communities can foster a diverse leadership pipeline.

Scholarships, mentorships, and targeted recruitment efforts can help eliminate barriers to entry and progression within the sector.

For the Canadian hospitality sector to flourish, a synergy between supportive policies and strategic educational investments is required. By embracing policy opportunities that foster an environment conducive to growth, and by making educational investments that develop a skilled and adaptable workforce, the sector can enhance its service excellence and global competitiveness. In this way, the sector will not only anticipate and respond to the evolving landscape of hospitality but will also drive innovation and excellence within the Canadian economy.

4   Scale Learning Lab: The Centrepiece of Innovation

4.1   Genesis and Evolution of the Scale Learning Lab

The Scale Learning Lab is an evolution from running in-person and synchronous training to a new cohesive approach that ensures that there is alignment between the training models. In addition, the new SLL has been purposely located in the hub of Toronto's Entertainment district to support the on-going operations of local restaurants. This new purpose-built kitchen is the primary training centre for all in-person and live broadcasting.

By having a training centre that doubles up as a function commissary for 20 other restaurants, trainees are trained not only in a real-world environment, but also use the actual ingredients and tools of the trade. For trainees to be trained with working chefs and staff is an irreplaceable form of training that gives them insights and working time in an environment that prepares with not only the skills of the trade, but also 'communication language' of the restaurants. This is an equally important form of training for Front of House staff knowing how food is prepped, how to inform and confirm client requests (allergies, food restrictions) that are completed in the kitchen and their service.

There are a total of five courses that are available online and designed and led by industry leaders. In addition, all have been designed to meet the accreditation standards of e-Campus Ontario, but not accredited as e-Campus is still working through private sector accreditation processes.

4.2   The Lab's Role in Shaping the Hospitality Sector's Future

The Scale Learning Lab (SLL) is not just responding to the current challenges faced by the hospitality sector; it is actively shaping its future. The SLL's role extends beyond training; it acts as a crucial for innovation, collaboration, and sectoral advancement. Through its programs, the Lab addresses the critical shortage of skilled labor by equipping participants with both the soft skills necessary for exceptional guest experiences and the technical acumen needed for complete operational success in the hospitality industry.

Partnerships with industry leaders and stakeholders are central to the SLL's approach, ensuring that the training provided is relevant, cutting-edge, and aligned with industry needs. These partnerships also contribute to the development of sustainable employment practices, with a focus on justice, access, inclusion, diversity, and equity. By incorporating the input and lessons from these leaders, the SLL ensures that its programs are not only industry-informed but also industry-driven.

The SLL's commitment to future-proofing the sector is evidenced by its innovative live broadcast learning systems and its focus on technology adoption. This commitment ensures that the workforce is ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow, adapt to market demands, and contribute to a vibrant, dynamic, and competitive hospitality sector.

In summary, the SLL's comprehensive approach to labor market challenges is redefining the landscape of hospitality training. It is creating a sustainable and robust pipeline of talent equipped to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving industry. The SLL's strategic initiatives, such as the live broadcasting of training programs, engagement with diverse community groups, and a focus on real-world experiences, are critical in addressing the sector's labor market challenges.

4.3 Programmatic Pillars of the Scale Learning Lab

4.3.1.1 BACK OF HOUSE-TRAINING PROGRAM

The BOH program is delivered to participants asynchronously first and then delivered in-person at the SLL Training Centre. The in-person sessions at SLL are spread over 3 days and consist of small working groups of 6-8 persons. The sessions include but are not limited to a review of line programs, the use of technology in the kitchen to manage orders, special requirements and inventory management.

Participants are trained in the usage of all equipment from knives to stoves to ovens and other ancillary equipment, as well as the process of opening and shutting down a kitchen as per health and safety regulations. From making bases to preparing meals of different genres takes the balance of time and the preparation of special client meals that are placed to order by the FOH group that is being trained in parallel to the BOH team.

Unlike most training, SLL trains FOH and BOH in the same period to ensure participants are aware of the symbiotic nature of serving guests and ensuring orders are correctly placed, prepared, and served. This is a critical step in ensuring guest satisfaction and that those especially with food allergies are properly addressed and double-checked by the FOH and BOH team.

This integrated approach to training ensures that as participants progress to a restaurant, they are aware of not only the work in the kitchen, but equally of the needs of the guest and support the guest experience. They advance from the SLL with the real-world experiences that the sector needs to address the talent shortage and at the same time provides the participant with leg-up on building their careers in the sector with real and tangible work experiences.

4.3.1.2 FRONT OF HOUSE – TRAINING PROGRAM

In the same format as the BOH, participants move from asynchronous training which is designed to provide in-depth information on FOH guests aspects, but also the nuances of food service and those especially around the precise high guest experiences needed to ensure the satisfied and repeat customer.

The FOH program has been designed with industry leaders for both the asynchronous and in-person session, with a focus on customer service, which include Host and Server programming as well as Bartending. The three are the front-line needs that are in demand and the programs are equally designed to provide career pathways to more senior roles as they participate and gain further real-world experiences.

At the SLL, aside from customer service, hosting and bartending training, all participants are provided in-depth technology training on the products that essentially drive the business of the restaurants. They include: (1) the reservation system; (2) order placement system; and (3) order delivery system. All three play a critical operational role and provide the financial data points that are used in management decision-making from staffing, ordering, and financial analysis. As such, all participants spend the necessary time to understand systems and how to address errors made and the importance of the systems with a focus on the in-house guest experience.

Training at the SLL starts with customer service, engagement, and ensuring guests are treated and served with the expectations they come with from cleanliness to service to order taking. By having both FOH and BOH training in parallel with the Bartender, all critical service elements of the customer journey are played in sequence.

Participants go through the customer experience from entering with the Host (in-training) to being seated and then are introduced to the menus by the Server (in-training), who then informs of the specials and requests any food restrictions including allergies. Participants then place all the orders with the various tech tools they have access for food and beverages. In parallel, the BOH and Bartender prepare the orders and guest (role-played) are served. While this is an extensive end-process of the training at the SLL, it simulates real-world conditions and ensures that participants are fully trained and have been immersed in how a restaurant operates. This process also ensures that those entering the sector are already fully trained and ready to take on the jobs in demand in the sector and come trained to the sector.

4.3.1.3 MANAGEMENT TRAINING AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The blending of technology and data is used to better understand operating trends and areas of improvement for more effective deployment of financial and human resources. This is an essential part of the Management Training (The Business of Restaurants) program that is specifically designed to

support career pathwaying for identified leaders. The current form of Management Training is being delivered at Scale as it finalizes the program to be available to the sector.

This training program is a long-term program focused on the upskilling of talent in the sector that want to build a career in the sector and that addresses the critical leadership talent deficit in restaurants.

With the increased use of technology products in restaurants and more front of line training to staff on the importance of their correct usage, there is a clear opportunity for sector leaders to increase the use of data from different inputs to make informed decisions. This new integrated approach is a steep learning curve for leadership that has been rooted in excel sheets and manually decision making to shift to the usage of technology in order to be more efficient in time management and making data-driven decisions.

The Management Training programs are not only focused on driving better business understanding and where the opportunities are to grow the business, but also build efficiencies into the process by converging technology products that are common to the sector (Point of Sale, Inventory, Marketing, Event Management, Reservations, etc.) into the data ecosystem. This is essentially a new way of thinking with the development of toolsets for staff, managers, and owners that is data driven and provides the necessary metrics, financials, and resource allocation to build long-term sector resiliency.

All Managers with Scale have been part of this program and provided with access to dashboards as well as access to end-of-day reporting on their mobile devices that is updated daily with the latest financial and operational metrics. This allows them to be able to make operational efficiency decisions in real-time. In addition, all Managers attend weekly group and restaurant meetings with leadership to review success and challenges as individual restaurant managers and group wide.

The convergence of financial and market driven information supports the guest experience and is used as part of the Management Training program to build marketing strategies that improve the financial performance, by understanding market trends such as walk-ins vs. reservations.

With data now informing on performance and metrics, the work with managers and corporate has become more informed and key decisions on labour, materials and other aspects of the business are made with the necessary information that is in real-time. By having a database of business data, Managers save hours on preparing data and now use the time to build their teams, focus on career pathwaying with their teams and having the toolsets are their disposal to make better forecasting decisions.

In parallel, this new form of training will build the critical next generation of sector leaders and provides the career pathwaying that ensures long-term growth opportunities for sector managers and resiliency in staffing for sector leadership. The advancement of technology within the sector is also

likely to spur an interest from those with business analysis skills that have not seen the hospitality sector as a career pathway.

4.3.1.4 DIGITAL EDUCATION AND BROADCAST LEARNING SYSTEM

Over the past two years SLL has advanced its learning systems that include an online learning platform to an integrated live broadcast system that supports real-time on-time learning between the learner and instructor as well as online training with common restaurants systems and with management teams.

Through these digital and broadcast systems, training becomes highly portable and accessible to participants locally in the GTA and nationally. The broadcast system is based in the Training Centre that provides learners with the access to the environments of restaurants and providing '*in-situ*' training.

The combination of these resources provides the SLL with a set of cohesive learning systems that is accessible and adaptable to the needs of the sector, and also provides the tools needed to support new skill development as well as the upskilling of talent.

4.4 Industry Engagement

In developing the most relevant, innovative, and adaptable training programs, the SLL is designed from the ground up with Industry partners that have representation varying from Toronto to provincial to national engagement and represent over 300 restaurants across Canada. The Partners are a cross-section of restaurants that are representative of entry to high-end service across the sector.

SLL has been working with these Partners in design and development of the training programs and have also been supporting the launch of the Training Centre in ensuring that Centre support industry-wide is needed in creating the future talent pipeline. Industry-led groups have a clear understanding of the needs at a ground level and can react to changes with immediacy and without bureaucracy.

SLL engages in regular dialogue with the partners in also understanding market shifts as well talent needs as different times of the year may require different talent needs to meet operational needs. These needs require that the SLL can pivot in meeting the needs and thus contributing to a more resilient and future-proof sector.

4.5 Community Engagement and Collaboration Efforts

Community Engagement has been at the forefront of all training program designs from the start with a focus on accessibility for the underserved, underrepresented to women to 2SLGBTQ+. Over the past

two years, the SLL has worked with community organizations in Regent Park, Parkdale, Rexdale, and other areas where accessibility to economically empowering training programs are lacking.

The SLL team includes Community Engagement Managers that are engaged with communities on a daily basis in supporting partners who want their clients to access the programs and get trained asynchronously. This is important as many in these marginalized areas need to work to support their families and need to find accessible and alternate forms of skill training. The Community team also works directly with participants to support their learning journey and preparing them for interviews in the sector.

SLL has hosted community groups at the Training Centre following its opening in Fall 2023 to high level of active participation and developing the new skill sets as needed for the Sector that included mock interviews with industry hiring staff in preparing them for future interviews as they enter the sector.

4.6 Promoting Accessibility and Inclusivity in Learning

The SLL training programs are designed with a digital first approach to ensure the highest level of accessibility for participants who want to participate in the training programs but need time flexibility to complete the programs. Ensuring accessibility has been at the forefront of the design of the program to encourage broader diverse participation in the sector and supporting marginalized communities with accessible programs.

The SLL asynchronous programs are not time bound for completion and offer the necessary flexibility for participants to complete whether it be on their computer or mobile device. With many having limited internet access, this allows participants to complete at places with internet access including community spaces, schools, and the library.

5   RESEARCH INSIGHTS AND IMPACT EVALUATION

With this project primarily focused on the development of using new methods in the delivery of training programs that combine both asynchronous and synchronous learning platforms

The Scale Learning Lab is a fully functioning training kitchen for both front and back of house talent development equipped with a live broadcasting system to supporting traditional sector and technology-inspired training and event webcasting.

The mandate of the SLL project is to build programs that are designed with industry leader insights and needs to meet sector demand for talent in the present and in the future.

5.1   Assessing the Lab's Evolution and Responsiveness

5.1.1.1   ADAPTATION OF THE LAB'S PURPOSE

The planning of the SLL was initiated in the summer of 2022 during the pandemic and the Lab was opened in the summer of the 2023 with the first in-person programming starting in September 2023.

During the phase of planning and working with Industry Partners, the design of the space was adjusted to ensure that it included not only a working kitchen space, but also a pastry space as an identified additional sector need. The addition of a pastry space will support the development of additional talent for the sector to meet needs.

In working with Partners, another adaptation is the focus on different roles at different times of the year as the restaurant sector has business cycles and a need to focus on talent development and sourcing. In October and April, all restaurants start to increase their staffing for the busy months ahead of them and this creates a need increased recruitment and talent of customer-facing staff as opposed to senior staff and/or managers.

The Lab is continuously focused on meeting in-demand needs of the sector by working closely with its Industry partners to adapt and pivot and to provide the training that is needed by those wanting to participate in the sector.

The SLL Lab is focused on innovation, adaptation to changing industry needs must be responsive and agile. The SLL is continuously focused on this including that with Community Partners and during the pilot of programming, learnings have supported shifts in community programming that included: increasing learning time, focus on pre-assessment work with community partners and ensuring there is a bridge point for in-person review of online programming and further discussed below.

5.1.1.2   Quantitative Outcomes from the Lab's Adaptations

While the focus on the Lab has been to future-proof the sector with partners and understanding the specific outcomes leading from learnings of the Lab being in planning for and extended time and then in-person training, the following represent quantitative outcomes based on learnings.

1. The most effective learning outcomes will require that in-person learning be reduced from 8-10 persons to a maximum of 6 students per class whether this be for Front or Back of House.
2. Once participants complete the asynchronous training, a further in-person review for 4 hours is required to ensure that all key learning components and cultural aspects of the sector are understood.
3. The Lab will need to pivot its training times to accommodate influx of participants during peak industry demand points in April and October. This will mean going from 2 to 4 training sessions per week.
4. Community engagement will require that trainers are increased to support them with a higher level of support from 1 to 2 trainers per 6 participants.

5.1.1.3   Qualitative Outcomes from the Lab's Adaptations

The SLL is a highly focused program with Industry partners that are acutely aware of their needs and challenges to meet the changing human capital assets within the restaurant sector. SLL is a model that supports the talent development of the sector working with Industry leaders in loop-back system.

1. With varying backgrounds of participants entering the SLL, training will need to be adaptive to the participants as some will come with sector experiences that can advance their learning journeys and provide better success outcomes as they complete the programs. This also requires that trainers can provide more personalized training within the cohort training period to support the participant.
2. The SLL team will need to be adaptive to participant cohorts especially when working with community groups and their participants while they are in training online and in-person. Webinars will support community participants through their asynchronous learning and provide the opportunity to engage and get feedback on their questions and where clarifications are needed.
3. Market assessments on an on-going basis will further support the training streams needed to meet industry talent needs and launch programs to directly support the identified market talent gaps.
4. Staff are consistently learning what the key aspects of that those who go through the asynchronous programs are, and where additional in-person support is needed with the demographic of participants who are new, upskilling, and/or re-entering the workforce.

5.1.1.4 KEY LEARNINGS FROM ENGAGEMENT WITH UNDERREPRESENTED COMMUNITIES:

1. Language is a consistent barrier to ensuring that learners grasp not only technical but also cultural nuances of the hospitality sector.
   a. During the course of training with community, the minimum language threshold was set at CLB 4, with a preference for CLB 5. Even with this threshold, there was still a language barrier between the written or completing training courses online as compared to spoken English.
   b. The language barrier required that all in-person training, and specifically with newcomers, required that community partners that were part of these cohorts would bring translators to the training programs to support as needed and to provide confidence building to participants to engage.
2. Program Adaptation to support newcomers where they are learning English
   a. When cohorts of English as a second language learners participated, the programs were adapted in-situ as needed to meet the language comprehension levels and allow for increased material absorption time.
   b. Having interpreters with in-person provided the necessary reinforcement of technical and cultural language support
   c. Diversity of trainers was a success factor as newcomers felt more comfortable, but also can see that the leadership and trainers come from underrepresented communities that some were newcomers themselves who supported the training programs
3. Learnings from Learners
   a. For those coming to Canada for Authoritarian regimes came with natural fears of making mistakes and fear of negative feedback from leaders or teachers and required that SLL trainers adapted to these cohorts with consistent positive feedback and that mistakes made are a part of the learning system
   b. Teaching was regimented and prescriptive with steps and rules and expectations on response formats as well as not to ask questions. Trainers and support staff from SLL discussed that working in restaurants is more a form or art and that independence to making decision makes a better hospitality worker and that questions are important to learning but also building collegial relationships as teamwork is critical to success.

5.2   Industry Leaders' Reception and Feedback

The SLL was designed from the start to be responsive in filling the talent needs for the sector that pre-dates the pandemic and was further challenged during the period of COVID-19. There was a significant exodus of talent during the pandemic with a large proportion not returning to the sector post and creating a talent gap with a need for a net new labour force.

The following summarizes Industry leader responses:

1. Industry leaders were supportive of a rapid workforce development program that can bring talent into the sector within a 30-90 day window as opposed to traditional programs that were 6 months or longer in duration. This allows for rapid talent gap filling.

2. Asynchronous programs opened the door to the sector to those that lack accessibility to training with time flexibility to complete and provided a standardized set of training for those returning to the sector.

3. The SLL fills a gap in the sector with its capabilities of live 'in-situ' training that allows for training of talent where accessibility to this form of training is lacking or simply unavailable.

4. The ability to pivot during peak hiring periods to provide the training needed for positions most in demand is innovative and a needed solution for the sector that is lacking.

5. Collaborative planning of the SLL to meet Industry demand for different restaurant formats and genres of food ensures that talent going into the sector have the foundational experiences to be successful in Front and Back of House roles.

6. Bringing together leaders on a regular basis to discuss and forecast changes in the sector and how to address them jointly will support the future-proofing of the sector.

5.2.1.1   MARKET DYNAMICS AND THE LAB'S PROGRAMMATIC RESPONSES

The Scale Learning Lab (SLL) has adeptly navigated the challenges and opportunities presented by the dynamic hospitality market. Since its planning phase in the summer of 2022 and through to its operational phase beginning in September 2023, the SLL has demonstrated a remarkable capacity for adaptation and innovation. The SLL's programmatic responses ensure that the workforce remains at the forefront of innovation and service excellence. Here is how the program has responded to the market dynamics, taking into account industry trends and feedback:

a) **Initiation and Adaptation**: The SLL was initiated during the pandemic's upheaval, reflecting an acute awareness of the sector's immediate and long-term needs. It adeptly adapted its training facilities to include specialized pastry spaces, responding to an identified market need for such skills.

b) **Seasonal and Cyclical Adjustments**: Aligning with the industry's business cycles, the Lab tailored its focus to meet the increased recruitment demand for customer-facing roles during the peak months of October and April, indicative of its responsive program design.

c) **Dynamic Training Schedules**: To accommodate the influx of participants during the industry's peak seasons, the SLL increased its training sessions from two to four times per week, demonstrating flexibility in its program delivery.

d) **Optimized Class Sizes**: Recognizing the importance of personalized attention, the SLL reduced its in-person class sizes to a maximum of six students, ensuring a quality learning environment and effective outcomes.

e) **Post-Training Integration**: The Lab incorporated an additional four-hour in-person review following asynchronous training, emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive grasp of both the practical skills and cultural aspects of the hospitality sector.

f) **Enhanced Trainer Support**: Doubling the trainer-to-participant ratio, the SLL increased its capacity to provide more personalized guidance and support, crucial for maintaining the high standards expected within the hospitality industry.

g) **Personalized and Adaptive Training**: The Lab's programs are designed to be adaptable to varying participant backgrounds, recognizing that personalized training enhances the learning experience and leads to better success outcomes upon program completion.

h) **Community Engagement and Support**: Webinars and other interactive tools are employed to support community participants through their online learning journey, ensuring engagement and providing necessary feedback mechanisms.

i) **Market Assessments for Training Relevance**: Ongoing assessments of market needs enable the SLL to adjust its training streams effectively, ensuring they are closely aligned with current industry talent gaps.

j) **Learning from Participant Feedback**: Continuous learning from participant experiences helps refine the training content, particularly for new entrants, those upskilling, or re-entering the workforce.

k) **Rapid Workforce Development**: Industry leaders have lauded the SLL for its rapid workforce development approach, significantly shortening the traditional timeline for training hospitality personnel.

l) **Accessibility Through Asynchronous Learning**: The Lab's asynchronous programs have expanded training access, allowing for a more flexible approach to learning and a standardized level of training for returning sector professionals.

m) **Live Training Capabilities**: The SLL's live 'in-situ' training capability has filled a critical gap, providing practical, hands-on experience where it was previously lacking.

n) **Training Adaptability During Peak Hiring**: The Lab's innovative scheduling ensures that training for in-demand positions is available precisely when the sector needs it most.

o) **Collaborative and Forward-Thinking Approach**: Through regular collaboration with industry leaders, the SLL remains ahead of the curve, planning for and addressing foreseeable changes within the hospitality sector to future-proof the industry.

These changes are aimed at aligning the Lab's educational offerings with the evolving industry trends, as well as addressing the feedback from industry leaders regarding workforce development. Through these programmatic responses and adaptations, the SLL has demonstrated its commitment to equipping the hospitality sector with a skilled, adaptable, and responsive workforce, prepared to meet current and future industry challenges.

5.3 SLL Leadership

5.3.1.1 SLL TEAM DEMOGRAPHICS

The SLL Leadership is a gender diverse group of leaders that come from different parts of the world contributing to a cosmopolitan perspective on the work of the SLL as well from an age perspective.

1. The team is comprised of 5 male and 4 female leaders.
2. Diversity wise, there is a mix of Indian, European, Latin, and Canadian staff.
3. The team ranges from their 20s to 50s.

In addition, there is an expanded group of team members that support the leadership group working at the training centre and with program support. The team is comprised of a cultural diversity and in age, bringing different perspectives and support to those being trained at the Lab.

5.3.1.2 WHAT IMPACT DOES THEIR DEMOGRAPHICS HAVE ON THE PROGRAM DESIGN

As a multicultural society, having a diverse set of leaders and staff supporting the program design has been instrumental in its design. The demographical profile of the team extends to work and lived experiences in marginalized and underrepresented communities that supports the engagement of these communities.

Program design has a correlative aspect based on the designers of the program. With the team's profiled demographics, the audience perspective is easier to understand and place within the construct of the programs. Those with lived experiences with English as a second language and having lived in marginalized/underrepresented communities have a deeper level of understanding of the challenges faced and the need for accessible programming, as well as clarity on the need for clear language and visuals especially in the asynchronous programming.

SLL programs have been designed from the ground up as: digital-first, accessible, and flexible for time completion. This process has been established to ensure that the community can easily access programs and build a net new talent pipeline to sector.

5.3.1.3   FUTURE-PROOFING THE SECTOR WITH THE SLL

Industry and SLL are focused on developing the programming and collaborative work to ensure the sector is future-proofed. This process led to the development of SLL and its various activities of programs, community engagement, technological upskilling and skill development, industry collaboration.

As an Industry, leaders are coming together to address real issues that they see everyday and working to resolve as a group of on-the-ground operators. This is different from Industry associations that represent wider range of operators and in most cases are focused policy and reform issues.

The SLL is the result of extensive dialogue with Industry leaders that identified gaps and solutions that is focused on the development and upskilling of talent for the sector that has been designed by Industry. The SLL also has the unique ability to pivot rapidly and continuously adapt to market conditions in delivery a rapid workforce development program.

In building new talent for the sector the SLL is engaged with a wide variety of community partners in diverse and marginalized neighbourhoods as well working with food security organizations. SLL team members regularly visit these communities and have opportunities to meet with community and inform them on the opportunities of the sector that are not fast-food service units.

5.4   Participant Engagement

SLL has been engaged in training a diverse community from those within the sector and those new to the sector. The metrics noted here are for the period April 01 to December 31, 2023.

5.4.1.1   DATA COLLECTION

The collection of data from participants was conducted as follows:
1. Primary participant collected through an online self-completion form. Note: in cases where language was a barrier, community partners would support completion of forms. This data was then stored in accordance with privacy standards as set by funders and in accordance with regulatory requirements.
   a. Primary Demographics
   b. Labour market attachment
   c. Diversity information
   d. Income information (but not values)
   e. Sector experience

2. Online Training Program via the Learning Management System collected
    a. Time to completion as a value
    b. Course status and completion as a %
    c. Attempts to complete as a value
    d. Courses taken and grading by participant and cohort as a value and average respectively.
3. Collection timelines:
    a. Participants were required to have all online data completed prior to starting asynchronous programs.
    b. In-person training evaluation and self-evaluation were completed prior to completion of in-person to ensure data was collected
4. In addition to formal data collection, informal discussions with participants, trainers, industry partners, and community partners provided the information needed for qualitative data points and program adaptations to improve participant outcomes.

5.4.1.2 PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

Total Participation 957

The following are self-identified with some sections in which participants did identify or preferred not to identify.

Underrepresented Communities (the use of racialized within our system was narrow and should have not been used as the majority of secondary datasets below were not based racialized communities.

Underrepresented groups include: women, Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Inuit and Métis), persons with disabilities, members of visible minority/racialized groups and members of LGBTQ2+ communities

Yes	702
No	230
Prefer not to say	151
Sum	957

Gender

Non-Binary	01
Man	317
Woman	238
Prefer not to say	228
Undisclosed	172
Sum	957

Location

Toronto	696
York	23
Waterloo	1
Thornhill	2
Scarborough	67
Richmond Hill	8
Pickering	1
North York	20
Mississauga	36
Kitchener	9
Etobicoke	7
East York	53
Cochrane	1
Cambridge	3
Brampton	21
Ajax	9
Sum	957

Source of Income

Employment Insurance	1
Employed with Employer	439
Dependent of OW/ODSP	2
ODSP	2
Ontario Works	22
No Income	72
Other	5
Self-Employed	11
Not Identified	403
Sum	957

Labour Force attachment

Attending College	10
Attending School	2
Attending University	6
Employed	435
Employed (on Leave)	1
Oher Training	1

Not employed and looking for work	35
Not employed and Not looking for work	1
Not employed with an employment offer	4
Not sure	2
Prefer not to say	435
Self Employed	14
Unemployed	11
Sum	957

Industry Experience

New to Sector	355
Incumbents	549
Upskilling	53
Sum	957
Self-identified with salary increase as a result from training as a %	26%

5.5   Participant engagement in training programs

The following metrics provide program success rates as engagement through online, in-person, and job performance results.

5.5.1.1   COHORT PARTICIPATION

1. Online learning was not cohort based. As the programs were designed to be self-learning and self-paced with expectation that courses would be completed within a a week from start to finish. This ensured a high-level of accessibility as well as flexibility when working with community partners to engage with their clients as they were ready to on-board and support participants to completion. For incumbents and new to sector not from community partners, it permitted participants to start and completed without the waiting for cohort entry date and for industry partners to train staff as they started or upgrade and upskill incumbents with flexible start dates.
2. In-person training was cohort based, and participants were only able to start courses as they completed all asynchronous training and as dates for in-persons were scheduled.
3. Cohort Design: people per class/location/time/etc.

Online Programs

	Started	957
	Completed	731

In-person Programs (October 01 to December 31, 2023)

Front of House			Cohorts	Completed	Underrepresented participation as a %
	Back of House	71	10	71	83%
	Management	62	5	62	63%
	Front of House	33	4	33	

Live Broadcast Participation

Training Form	Participation	Cohorts	Completed
Back of House	84	7	84
Front of House	116	6	116

5.6   Job performance results from training

The following identifies labour force participation following training for those that have responded to questionnaires.

The following is based on responses as not all responded to the questionnaires post training.

New Sector Entrants (355)

Part-time participation	87
Full-time participation	71

Incumbents (549)

Increase participation from part-time to full-time	37
Increase in salary	108
Seniority increase	17

Upskilling (53)

Increase in responsibilities	21
Salary increase	7
Seniority increase	4

5.7 Community Partners

5.7.1.1 DEMOGRAPHICS

1. The Scale Learning Lab (SLL) actively collaborates with community partners across the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), focusing on areas where marginalized and underrepresented groups are predominant. This strategic partnership ensures that the benefits of the SLL extend into communities that traditionally face barriers to entry into the hospitality sector. Key demographic insights include:

2. **Newcomers' Engagement**: The SLL has successfully engaged a significant number of newcomers, primarily from the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia, integrating a wealth of diverse cultural perspectives and skills into the hospitality industry. This demographic is crucial as they often bring unique culinary traditions and hospitality insights that can enrich the Canadian hospitality landscape.

3. **Family and Individual Participation**: The program has seen participation from both families and individuals, indicating its wide appeal and accessibility. The training offered by the SLL provides these participants with viable career paths, which can be particularly transformative for families seeking to establish themselves in new communities.

4. **Local Underrepresented Populations**: The SLL has reached deeply into local communities, engaging underrepresented persons with diverse lived experiences. These individuals range from those who have resided locally for five years to second- and third-generation community members. By tapping into this rich pool of local talent, the SLL ensures that the hospitality workforce is reflective of the community it serves.

5. **Inclusion of 2SLGTBQ Community**: The program has been inclusive of members from the 2SLGTBQ community, fostering a diverse and welcoming environment within the SLL. This inclusion is critical for building a hospitality culture that values and respects diversity in sexual orientation and gender identity, which is increasingly important to both staff and patrons.

6. The SLL's commitment to diversity and inclusion is not merely a social initiative; it's a strategic approach that positions the hospitality industry to thrive in a multicultural context. By fostering an environment that values varied backgrounds and experiences, the SLL enhances the sector's creativity, adaptability, and global competitiveness.

5.7.1.2 PARTICIPANT SUCCESS RESULTS

The following represent program participation for participants entering through partnerships with community partners only.

Total program participation	238

Online program participation (Apr to Dec, 2023)	238
Online program completion	177
In-person participation (Oct to Dec, 2023)	93
In-person completion	84
Underrepresented communities	100%
Men	62%
Women	38%

5.7.1.3 MEASURING LEARNING SUCCESS

1. **Online** learning success was measured and tracked through the Learning Management System (LMS) that measured time spent, progress tracking to completion, and resulting grades on completion. The minimum threshold to pass the course was 75%. Where learners were challenged in completion, Scale training team as well as community partners (where applicable) would support to be successful as part of their training session
2. **In-person** success was measured with trainers who led the training programs. In cases, where participants were challenged or had difficulty with language or elements of training, staff would support participants to the extent possible to successful and also be ready to enter the sector. The in-person also provide for forms of informal learning with participants having time to engage with industry leaders who also attended courses as well staff from the sector.
3. **Feedback** to the programs was provided through three formats that included:
    a. **Formal online** evaluation forms that were digital sent and collected focused on program delivery, content, and learning formats.
    b. **Formal in-person** evaluation forms were completed participants that attended the in-person training that focused on delivery and learning outcomes as well as training relevance and trainers themselves
    c. **Informal** included those in-person interactions as well as conversations with staff by phone, email and in-person as the opportunities were presented.
    d. **Feedback received** was taken into consideration as the SLL team met on a regular basis to improve program delivery and content on a regular basis. In addition, where in-formal or formal provided feedback that was critical, these were taken into consideration and how the content and /or trainer adaptations may be needed to pivot quickly to support learning outcomes.

5.7.1.4 COMMUNITY LEARNINGS

1. Ensuring when Newcomers attend training, a community lead is present especially when there may be a language barrier.
2. Prior to training at the Lab, a review of the asynchronous training takes place with a focus to the cultural nuances of the sector whether it be FOH or BOH training.

3. The training pace for those with a lower English level (CLB 5 or less) is extended to support their learning needs and a higher level of success.
4. Ensuring that community participants are aware that restaurant sector is hierarchical, and most staff start working and learning from entry level roles and move up from there.
5. Supporting community partners with sector entrance requirements to ensure participants meet prior or can meet them during their course of their engagement with the SLL
6. Increased community engagement with SLL community leads to discuss the role of SLL on programming and opportunities in entering the sector.
7. Having SLL leaders visit community to discuss their journeys as some have come from marginalized communities and grew themselves into the sector.

5.7.1.5   COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

1. **Community Partnerships** were critical to the success of the SLL and its programs to provide training to underrepresented community members and to provide the opportunities to get trained in the sector with the necessary skills to enter the sector. community partners for both online and in-person included (these participated with in-person and online programs:
   a. Square Circle
   b. Daily Food Bank
   c. Balmoral Aid and Support Services
   d. JayU
   e. Yonge Street Mission
2. **Training Locations** included community settings where groups were brought together for online to support their training, and all in-person was at the Scale Learning Lab location
3. **Frequency** of training was based on cohorts ready for training and in the later period of Sept to Dec was held weekly at the Scale Learning Lab for in-person and on an adhoc basis at local community partner offices that averaged twice a month.

5.8   Industry Partners

5.8.1.1   HOW HAS THE SLL SUPPORTED THE NEEDS OF INDUSTRY?

The Scale Learning Lab (SLL) has supported the needs of the hospitality industry through a multifaceted approach that aligns with the sector's demands for skilled labor, particularly in high-demand periods. Here's a detailed analysis:

Alignment with Industry Cycles: Understanding the hospitality industry's fluctuating demand, the SLL has strategically scheduled its training programs around peak hiring times. This alignment ensures that graduates are ready to enter the workforce when restaurants, such as those within the SCALE

Hospitality Group and its network of 20 restaurants, are actively looking to staff up. By doing so, the SLL supports the industry by directly addressing the workforce shortages that typically precede busy seasons.

Specialized Skill Development: The SLL has identified and filled gaps in specialized areas within the hospitality sector. The inclusion of a pastry space within the training facility, for example, was a direct response to the industry's articulated need for skilled pastry chefs. This specialization not only meets a specific market need but also enhances the versatility and attractiveness of the workforce being trained.

Diverse Workforce Cultivation: The demographic data of SLL participants reflects significant diversity, with a near-equal balance of individuals identifying as part of racialized communities (326) and those who do not (338), as well as a substantial gender diversity with 238 women, 317 men, and 1 non-binary individual. This diversity supports the industry's need for a workforce that mirrors the multicultural fabric of Canada's population, particularly in a city as diverse as Toronto, where the majority of participants are located. This is essential for businesses that thrive on cultural competency and a diverse service offering.

Labour Force Attachment: The SLL has effectively engaged individuals across various employment statuses, most notably those already employed (435) and actively looking for work (35). By providing upskilling opportunities as well as entry points into the industry, the SLL has ensured that there is a continuous pipeline of work-ready professionals to meet ongoing industry needs.

Community Engagement: The SLL's strong ties with local communities and its focus on accessible training have facilitated the entry of individuals from various parts of the Greater Toronto Area into the hospitality workforce. By providing training opportunities to residents of areas like Scarborough, North York, Mississauga, and others, the SLL has effectively widened the recruitment net for the industry, ensuring a broader and more inclusive approach to talent development.

In summary, the Scale Learning Lab has adeptly supported the hospitality industry's needs by providing timely, specialized, and inclusive training programs that directly address the sector's cyclical demands, skill gaps, and diversity goals.

5.8.1.2   HAS THE SLL BEEN ABLE TO PIVOT RAPIDLY TO MEET INDUSTRY TALENT NEEDS.

The Scale Learning Lab (SLL) has showcased remarkable agility in meeting the rapidly changing talent needs of the hospitality industry. This adaptability is reflected in several key aspects of the program:

Responsive Program Design: The SLL's curriculum is not static; it has been dynamically adjusted to incorporate real-time industry feedback and emerging market trends. This responsiveness is evidenced

by the SLL's decision to add a pastry space to its training facilities, a direct response to the identified shortage of pastry chefs in the hospitality market.

Flexible Training Schedules: Understanding the ebb and flow of the hospitality industry's labor demands, the SLL has demonstrated flexibility in its training schedules. The lab has doubled its training sessions during peak hiring periods, going from two to four sessions per week, which aligns with the industry's urgent staffing needs in preparation for the busy months. This ensures that graduates are job-ready when the industry's demand for talent is at its highest.

Rapid Workforce Development: The SLL's training programs are designed to rapidly develop skills and prepare participants for immediate employment. This is particularly crucial for the industry, which often experiences sudden increases in demand for staff. The Lab's ability to produce work-ready talent within a 30-90 day window is a testament to its effectiveness in meeting the industry's need for quick talent turnaround.

Industry Partnerships: The collaboration with industry partners such as the SCALE Hospitality Group, Keg Restaurants Ltd, and Sir Corp, among others, allows the SLL to tailor its training programs to specific industry requirements. These partnerships also provide immediate channels for employment, as partners are keen to hire graduates who have undergone training that they have had a hand in shaping.

Market Insights and Adaptation: The SLL stays informed with market insights, allowing it to anticipate and prepare for shifts in the hospitality sector. Whether it's the rising trend of casual dining, the growing expectation of culinary excellence, or the operational pivot due to the pandemic, the SLL's training programs reflect these trends, ensuring that the skills taught are current and in demand.

Data-Driven Strategies: The SLL leverages participant demographic data to understand and serve the needs of the industry better. By analyzing the labor force attachment data, such as the number of participants employed, looking for work, or in different stages of education, the SLL can adjust its training intensity and focus areas. For instance, the high number of self-identified racialized individuals and women in the program also speaks to the industry's push towards greater diversity and inclusion, aligning the talent pool with societal trends and consumer expectations.

In conclusion, the SLL has indeed been able to pivot rapidly to meet the talent needs of the hospitality industry. Its success lies in its proactive design, responsiveness to industry cycles, robust partnerships, and commitment to staying ahead of market trends. These strategies collectively ensure that the SLL remains a vital contributor to the sector's workforce development.

5.8.1.3   HAS THE SLL IMPROVED STAFF PRODUCTIVITY AND RETENTION?

The Scale Learning Lab (SLL) has implemented several strategies aimed at improving staff productivity and retention in the hospitality industry. While the program is in its nascent stages, early indicators suggest that the SLL's approach can have a positive impact on these critical areas:

Enhanced Training Quality:

By adopting small-group training models and ensuring a high trainer-to-participant ratio, the SLL has provided a quality learning experience that equips participants with the skills needed to be productive from the onset of their employment. This hands-on, focused approach to skill development is designed to increase the confidence and competence of staff, which are key factors in productivity.

Career Pathway Development:

The SLL's emphasis on creating clear career pathways in partnership with industry leaders is a forward-thinking approach that has the potential to improve retention. When employees can see a future and opportunities for advancement within an organization or sector, they are more likely to stay and invest in their careers. The SLL's efforts to align with companies that recognize the value of career progression should contribute to a more stable and committed workforce.

Responsive Curriculum:

By staying responsive to the market and updating its curriculum to include in-demand skills, the SLL ensures that participants are well-prepared to meet the current needs of the industry. This responsiveness not only aids in immediate productivity but also fosters a culture of continuous learning and adaptability among staff, which is beneficial for retention.

Diversity and Inclusion:

The SLL's diverse participant demographic is reflective of the program's commitment to inclusivity, which is increasingly recognized as a driver of innovation and team productivity. By welcoming individuals from various backgrounds and experiences, the SLL is helping to build a workforce that can cater to a diverse customer base and create an inclusive workplace culture that supports retention.

Preliminary Outcomes:

While the SLL is still gathering comprehensive data to more conclusively speak to its long-term impact on productivity and retention, early feedback from industry partners is optimistic. The hands-on, personalized training is seen as an investment in the sector's workforce that will likely yield positive returns in terms of employee satisfaction and longevity in the industry.

Looking to the Future:

As the SLL matures and more data becomes available, there will be greater insight into the direct correlation between its training programs and improvements in productivity and retention. It is hoped that the participants of the SLL will view their training experience not just as a job but as the beginning of a rewarding career path, with the SLL being a crucial stepping stone.

In conclusion, while it is still early to quantify the SLL's impact on staff productivity and retention fully, the program is built on principles that are well-established in enhancing these areas. Continued evaluation and data analysis will, in time, provide a clearer picture of the SLL's effectiveness in fostering a productive and loyal hospitality workforce.

5.8.1.4 NUMBER OF INDUSTRY PARTNERS AND THEIR INVESTMENT IN THIS PROGRAM

The Scale Learning Lab (SLL) has forged strong partnerships with prominent players in the hospitality industry to enhance its program and directly address the sector's skill requirements.

Industry Partners that were engaged for this project include the following that manage and/or control over 250 restaurant units across Canada:

1. SCALE Hospitality Group with its 20 restaurants
2. La Carnita Multiple locations
3. Fox and Fiddle (Multiple locations)
4. Palais Royale
5. Burgers Priest (Multiple locations)
6. Eatertainment
7. Keg Restaurants Ltd (Multiple locations)
8. Mr Greek (Multiple locations)
9. Sir Corp (Multiple locations)
10. Firkin Pubs (Multiple locations)

The make-up of the Industry partners also includes franchise systems that has supported information from independent operators to same format multi-unit to those with different unique brands under one corporation. This variation has ensured that through formal engagements to the more frequent informal discussions viewpoints on the sector, its future, and what companies need from training systems to building diverse teams are shared.

While SLL partners have not defined a direct dollar investment, Scale has invested over $2M in the Scale Learning Lab.

Their investments have been categorized into several key areas:

1) **Curriculum Development and Enhancement:**
   1. Collaborating on curriculum design to ensure relevancy with industry standards.
   2. Providing insights into emerging trends and operational techniques.
   3. Offering expertise in specialized areas such as pastry arts, fine dining, and fast-casual service.

2) **Experiential Learning and Practical Training:**
   1. Hosting on-site training opportunities within their establishments.
   2. Allowing students to gain hands-on experience in real-world settings.
   3. Conducting live demonstrations and culinary workshops.

3) **Employment Pathways and Mentorship:**
   1. Creating direct hiring pipelines for SLL graduates.
   2. Providing mentorship programs led by industry veterans.
   3. Offering internships and apprenticeships for practical skill application.

4) **Financial Investment and Resource Provision:**
   1. Funding scholarships and supporting the expansion of training facilities.
   2. Donating equipment and resources for advanced training modules.
   3. Sponsoring events and competitions to stimulate learning through practical challenges.

5) **Industry Integration and Networking:**
   1. Facilitating networking opportunities with hospitality leaders and businesses.
   2. Organizing industry forums for knowledge exchange and professional development.
   3. Engaging in collaborative problem-solving initiatives for sector-wide challenges.

6) **Feedback and Continuous Improvement:**
   1. Participating in regular feedback sessions to assess the effectiveness of the training.
   2. Contributing to continuous program refinement based on industry evolution.
   3. Involving in strategic planning sessions to align SLL offerings with market needs.

Through these varied forms of investment, the industry partners have significantly contributed to the design and delivery of a program that is closely aligned with the real-time needs of the hospitality sector. Their collective support has been critical in establishing a solid foundation for the SLL, enabling it to produce a skilled, adaptable, and industry-ready workforce.

5.8.1.5   SCALE INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT DETAILS

1. **Engagement** with Industry was comprised of both informal and formal sessions.
    (a) In the hospitality and more so in the restaurant vertical, informal gathering of leaders is a common form in which leaders would meet to discuss areas of concern, improvement and how to support each other. Most of these meetings would take place at different partner establishments and in other cases over the phone or video. When there was a need to get feedback or have discussions on the project,
    (b) The engagements included at least one meeting with leaders from each of the above noted organizations and in most cases we had a number conversations that were focused on the role of the SLL, what type of training programs would make an impact to increase the talent pipeline as well as the various roles that were in constant demand
    (c) Formal engagements included discussions jointly with the leaders as well on program design and what the role of SLL would be in supporting the sector
2. **Program Design** was a key component of formal meetings with industry leaders to review the programs as well as what industry leaders deemed as key components to ensure that those being trained meet the demand of the future. Leaders provided input to the programs and consulted on the tools that should be embedded within the SLL that are used across the sector. Feedback that was received was used to build the programs and as training took place, leaders also participated to review and that the feedback was used for program improvements
3. **Meetings** that were formal were held monthly at the initial stages and then every other month as the construction took place and then monthly as the programs were piloted and then executed. In addition, testing with leaders took place to test the Broadcast systems and the interaction of online workshops to make sure that they met expectations. As noted above, informal meetings were more frequent as leaders are constantly having discussions and where it led to SLL, outcomes were noted and applied to the work of the SLL.
4. **Sharing of information** was through meetings with Industry leaders via documents that informed them of progress on the design and build of the SLL as well as training program briefs as well walking them through the actual programs on the Learning Management System and attending training sessions. In addition, as Industry meetings were held formally and informally, additional information was shared on trends, talent needs that were present and projected.
5. **Data collection** on success of incumbents and new entrants was primarily tracked through the database on training success, evaluation data collected and information from participants on increased salaries from upskilling.

Scale Learning Lab Sustainability

With the financial support of FSC and the investment from Scale Hospitality Group, the Scale Learning Lab will be a long-term sustainable project supporting the sector with providing the training and a place for leaders to engage on challenges that will be faced. The SLL continues to provide training to new and incumbent sector participants and with the Broadcast system, engagement with community groups and participants supports those with interactive training.

Accessibility and inclusivity are key element of the SLL and the combination of training space that is accessible, and industry led in coordination with the online training programs and supportive staff will encourage those where there are barriers to participate in hospitality sector.

Scale will continue to invest its resources, both human and capital to ensure that the SLL is continuously adapting to the needs of the sector working with partners.

5.8.1.6   WHAT IS THE ROI ON TRAINING TO TALENT HIRING AND RETENTION?

Immediate ROI:

- **Reduction in Recruitment Costs**: The SLL's targeted training programs are likely to have decreased the costs associated with recruiting new talent. By equipping participants with the necessary skills and knowledge demanded by the industry, the time-to-hire is shortened, and businesses save on the expenses typically incurred during the hiring process.

- **Enhanced Employee Onboarding**: Employees emerging from the SLL enter their roles with a higher level of preparedness, reducing the traditionally resource-intensive onboarding period. This leads to a swifter transition to full productivity, enhancing the ROI through the early and effective contribution of new hires to their teams.

- **Lowered Turnover Rates**: The comprehensive training provided by the SLL is designed to increase job satisfaction, which is intrinsically linked to employee retention. This satisfaction, derived from career development opportunities and a sense of preparedness for the role, can reduce turnover rates, which are often a significant cost to businesses.

Long-Term ROI:

- **Sustained Employee Engagement**: The investment in training is believed to foster a culture of learning and development, which can enhance long-term employee engagement. Engaged employees tend to deliver higher quality service, leading to customer satisfaction and loyalty, both of which are critical revenue drivers in the hospitality industry.

- **Brand Enhancement**: Businesses associated with the SLL gain a reputation for prioritizing employee development, making them employers of choice for top talent. This enhances the

employer brand and attracts a higher caliber of candidates, thereby improving the quality of hires and potentially leading to better retention.

- **Innovation and Adaptability**: Training equips staff with the latest industry insights and skills, fostering an environment that encourages innovation. An innovative workforce can adapt more readily to market changes, maintaining the business's competitive edge and ensuring its growth, which is a significant component of ROI.

Projection for Future Measurement:

Given that the SLL is relatively new, the full spectrum of ROI in terms of talent hiring and retention will be more accurately assessed as more data becomes available over time. It is expected that the comprehensive training and career development pathways provided by the SLL will manifest in a demonstrably positive ROI as program participants progress within the industry.

Conclusion:

The ROI on training with respect to talent hiring and retention is multifaceted, encompassing immediate cost savings and long-term benefits such as sustained employee engagement and brand reputation. As the SLL matures and more data is collected, we can anticipate a clearer picture of ROI. However, the current indicators point towards a positive impact, reinforcing the value of training initiatives for the growth and resilience of the hospitality sector.

6 PROGRAM KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Key findings

1. **Alignment with Industry Cycles:** The SLL's strategic alignment with the restaurant sector's hiring cycles, particularly in preparation for peak seasons, has demonstrated the importance of synchronizing educational initiatives with industry rhythms.

2. **Optimization of Class Size:** The reduction of class sizes to a maximum of six students has led to more individualized attention and better learning outcomes, a model that could be scaled across industry training programs.

3. **Blended Learning Efficacy:** The Lab's integration of asynchronous training with supplemental in-person reviews has shown that a hybrid model is effective in deepening the understanding and retention of learned skills.

4. **Responsive Training Scheduling:** Adjusting training frequency to match the peaks in industry demand (from 2 to 4 sessions per week) has allowed the SLL to be more responsive to the sector's needs, highlighting the need for flexible scheduling in training programs.

5. **Enhanced Trainer-Participant Ratio:** Doubling the trainer-to-participant ratio has improved the quality of training, suggesting that increased instructor availability is key to better educational outcomes.

6. **Diversity and Inclusion:** The Lab's focus on diversity and tapping into underrepresented demographics has enriched the talent pool, particularly in leadership roles, demonstrating the sector's capacity for inclusivity.

7. **Community Partnership Impact:** The SLL's work with community partners has highlighted the significance of pre-assessment and bridging points for in-person review, ensuring that online learning translates effectively into practical skills.

8. **Industry Feedback Integration:** Regular feedback from industry leaders has allowed the SLL to adapt quickly to emerging trends, proving that a feedback loop with industry stakeholders is critical for the relevance and success of training programs.

9. **Rapid Workforce Development:** The Lab's ability to fill talent gaps rapidly (within a 30-90 day window) contrasts with traditional 6-month programs, underscoring the effectiveness of accelerated learning pathways.

10. **Standardization Through Asynchronous Learning:** Asynchronous learning programs have provided a standardized baseline of skills for new and returning workers, showcasing the benefits of consistent training benchmarks.

11. **Live 'In-Situ' Training Gaps Filled:** The SLL's live training capabilities have addressed a critical training gap, providing hands-on experience that was previously lacking, which is vital for practical skills development in the sector.

12. **Strategic Talent Gap Filling:** The SLL's quick response to talent needs, particularly post-pandemic, demonstrates the importance of agility in educational programming to support industry recovery and growth.

6.2   Recommendations

The hospitality industry's continued growth and resilience depend on strategic educational programming and industry alignment. Based on the successful strategies of the Scale Learning Lab (SLL) and current industry needs, the following detailed recommendations are proposed to ensure sustained innovation and growth in the sector:

1. **Establish Industry-Aligned Training Calendars:** Training programs should be precisely synchronized with the hospitality industry's seasonal and cyclical patterns. By designing training schedules that align with these fluctuations, the workforce can be primed for peak performance when demand surges, ensuring that staffing levels meet the sector's dynamic needs.
2. **Adopt Small-Group Training Models:** Educational institutions are encouraged to embrace the small-group training model championed by the SLL. This approach allows for personalized instruction and deeper engagement with the material, leading to more effective skill acquisition and retention.
3. **Expand Blended Learning Options:** Further investment is needed to expand hybrid training modules that merge the convenience of online learning with the practical application of in-person training. This blending of learning environments caters to diverse learning preferences and can accommodate various schedules while ensuring essential hands-on experience.
4. **Institute Flexible Training Frequencies:** Training frequencies should be adaptable, with the capacity to intensify during the hospitality sector's high-demand periods. This flexibility ensures a ready and competent workforce exactly when and where it is needed most.
5. **Improve Instructor Accessibility:** Increasing the availability of instructors and mentors within training programs is imperative. Enhanced access to knowledgeable professionals ensures comprehensive learning support, catering to individual student needs and promoting a higher quality of educational outcomes.

6. **Promote Sector Diversity:** Initiatives aimed at increasing the representation of diverse groups within all levels of the hospitality industry, especially in leadership roles, should be actively developed. Diversity in the workforce is not just a social good but also a driver of innovation, cultural competence, and a broader understanding of diverse customer bases.
7. **Strengthen Community Partnerships:** Forging stronger bonds with community organizations is vital for the development of training programs that effectively connect theoretical online learning with practical skills. These partnerships can facilitate transitions into the workforce and support lifelong learning and skill refinement.
8. **Incorporate Regular Industry Consultation:** A structured feedback system involving industry leaders will ensure the ongoing relevance and responsiveness of educational programs. Regular consultations can help education providers stay abreast of current industry challenges and emerging trends, allowing for real-time curriculum adjustments.
9. **Accelerate Workforce Development:** Exploring ways to streamline and expedite training programs will address labor shortages more rapidly without compromising the quality of training. Shorter, more intensive training courses can quickly upskill workers and fulfill immediate sector needs.
10. **Standardize Training Curricula:** Efforts should be made to standardize training curricula for entry-level positions across the hospitality sector. A uniform skills foundation facilitates workforce mobility and ensures consistent service standards across different establishments.
11. **Enhance Practical Training Access:** Investing in training facilities that offer live, practical training experiences is critical. Access to real-world scenarios ensures that students and new workers are not just theoretically knowledgeable but also practically adept and job-ready.
12. **Agility in Educational Programming:** Educational programming must remain agile, with the ability to quickly adapt to market demand and industry trends. This agility allows for the rapid implementation of new training modules in response to technological advancements and shifts in consumer preferences.

By implementing these recommendations, the hospitality sector can ensure the development of a skilled, responsive, and diverse workforce that is equipped to meet the demands of a rapidly changing industry. These strategies are key to fostering innovation, resilience, and long-term career opportunities within the hospitality sector.