



What We Heard Report

NWT Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupational Certification Strategy Extension

October 2024

K'áhshó got'íne xadā k'é hederí ɬedjhtl'é yeriníwə ní dé dúle.
Dene Kádá

7erihŋtʰis Dēne Sųtıné yatı t'a huts'elkēr xa beyáyatı theʔa ʔat'e, nuwe ts'ēn yóŋti.
Dēne Sųtıné

Edi gondi dehgáh got'je zhatié k'éé edat'éh enahddhë nide naxets'é edahíí.
Dene Zhatié

Jii gwandak izhii ginjik vat'atr'ijahch'uu zhit yinohthan jì', diits'at ginohkhii.
Dinjii Zhu' Ginjik

Uvanittuaq ilitchurisukupku Inuvialuktun, ququaq'luta.
Inuvialuktun

Inuktitut

**Hapkua titiqqat pijumagupkit Inuinnaqtun, uvaptinnut hivajarlutit.
Inuinnaqtun**

kīspin ki nitawihitīn ē nīhīyawihk ōma ācimōwin, tipwāsīnān.
nēhīyawēwin

Tɪjchɔ yati k'èè. Dɪ wegodi newɔ dè, gots'o goneɔde.
Tɪjchɔ

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Executive Summary

The [*2017-22 Apprenticeship, Trades, and Occupational Certification Strategy*](#) has been a pivotal framework driving advancements in skilled trades and occupations training within the Northwest Territories (NWT). Focused on enhancing accessibility, client satisfaction, employer engagement, and community development, the Strategy has significantly impacted various facets of the NWT's workforce landscape.

Concluding in December 2022, the [*Apprenticeship, Trades, and Occupational Certification Strategy's Final Report*](#), released in July 2023, showcased remarkable progress across key indicators:

1. **Increased Participation:** The Schools North Apprenticeship Program experienced significant growth, with participation soaring from zero students in 2016 to 22 students by 2022.
2. **Indigenous Inclusion:** Notable strides were made in Indigenous participation, with 59 percent of new apprentices in 2021-22, compared to 51 percent in 2016.
3. **Enhanced Satisfaction:** Both employers and apprentices reported heightened satisfaction levels, attributing it to a more nurturing and supportive environment tailored to meet the diverse needs and preferences of stakeholders.
4. **Gender Diversity:** Efforts to encourage female participation in the trades saw success, with the proportion of new female apprentices rising from 2 percent in 2016 to 8 percent in 2021-2022.
5. **Awareness Campaigns:** Extensive promotional campaigns raised awareness about skilled trades training and certification, ensuring broader reach of information and resources.

Building upon these achievements, the extension of the *Apprenticeship, Trades, and Occupational Certification Strategy* will align it with the overarching labor market strategy of the Government of the Northwest Territories, known as Skills 4 Success. This extension aims to maintain the momentum gained under the former Strategy while synchronizing with the conclusion of the *Skills 4 Success 10-Year Strategic Framework* in 2025.

The engagement on the extended Strategy presented an opportunity for stakeholders across the NWT to contribute their ideas and perspectives towards further enhancing apprenticeship, trades, and occupational certification. The engagement sessions highlighted challenges such as a scarcity of workforce in trades, as well as a lack of awareness and enthusiasm among young individuals and families. Additionally, financial obstacles persist for apprentices attending training, impeding individuals from pursuing apprenticeships.

By aligning with Skills 4 Success, the renewed Strategy seeks to identify fresh priorities and actions crucial for advancing workforce development and ensuring the prosperity of the NWT's skilled labor force.

Introduction

From January 15 to February 16, 2024, we gathered input from 15 stakeholders regarding the extension of the *Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupational Certification Strategy*. This input came through emails, meetings and three engagement sessions. Due to limited participation during these sessions, we organized an additional round of engagements from April 30 to May 7, 2024, hosting six more sessions that drew a total of 36 participants, including stakeholders, industry apprentices and employers. Attendees had the choice to engage in-person or virtually. Feedback was also accepted via email.

The engagement sessions were structured around the four goals of the *2017-22 Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupational Certification Strategy*:

1. Increase skill levels through relevant education and training.
2. Bridge education and employment gaps through targeted supports.
3. Grow the NWT workforce through partnerships.
4. Improve decision-making with relevant labour market information.

There were questions specific to each of the goals to shape the discussion and find common themes. Broad discussions on apprenticeship programming were also had and comments relevant to Government of the Northwest Territories programs and actions are found within this report.

Methodology

Information on the Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupational Certification Strategy extension and how to provide feedback were publicly posted on the Government of the Northwest Territories' public engagement [website](#). Additional tactics used to inform the public of the engagement included a public service announcement, Minister's Statement in the Legislative Assembly, social media content, Facebook advertising and email notification to employers, journeypersons, apprentices and industry stakeholders.

The Government of the Northwest Territories website had supporting materials to help inform interested participants such as:

- A copy of the [2017-22 ATOC Strategy and Performance Measurement Plan](#);
- A copy of the [2017-22 ATOC Strategy Report](#), published in July 2023; and
- A [plain language summary](#) outlining the process of the *Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupational Certification Strategy* extension with questions to structure the input from stakeholders.

During the engagement sessions, participants received a presentation that provided an overview and results of the *2017-22 Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupational Certification Strategy* overview, followed by the proposed development of the Strategy extension. Questions were provided to direct the conversation and collect feedback in a succinct manner. Below is a list of the discussion questions.

- **What are the biggest challenges facing apprenticeship, trades and occupational certification in the NWT and beyond?**
- **What should the Government of the Northwest Territories focus on to support and advance trades and occupational certification in the NWT?**
- **How can the Government of the Northwest Territories increase the number of apprentices and certified Journeypersons in the NWT? In the small communities?**
- **What can be done to support innovative approaches to apprentice supervision given shortages of certified Journeypersons?**
- **What should be done to increase the number of women in trades and occupations in the NWT?**
- **What can be done to support innovative approaches to apprentice supervision given shortages of certified Journeypersons?**

What We Heard

This report is based on feedback collected through nine engagement sessions offered in-person in Yellowknife. All sessions were also available virtually. Fifty-one individuals participated in total. Partners who provided input included: employers, apprentices, Indigenous government representatives, industry representatives, and Government of the Northwest Territories staff from Housing NWT and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. Four people provided feedback by email. Below is a summary of what was heard. The feedback provided by partners is grouped around the five questions identified as key items.

- **What are the biggest challenges facing apprenticeship, trades and occupational certification in the NWT and beyond?**
 1. **Lack of Available Workforce:** Employers have identified a significant shortage of workers in the trades. This scarcity makes it difficult to fill apprenticeship positions and meet the demand for skilled labor.
 2. **Lack of Awareness and Motivation:** Many young people and their families are unaware of the opportunities and benefits that careers in trades and apprenticeships offer. This lack of awareness, coupled with societal biases that favor academic over vocational paths, leads to low motivation to pursue these careers.
 3. **Need to Target Younger Students:** It is crucial to engage students at a younger age to inform and inspire them about careers in trades. Early exposure through school programs, career days, and hands-on experiences can help build interest and commitment.
 4. **Financial Barriers:** The costs associated with apprenticeships, including tuition, tools, and living expenses, can be prohibitive for many potential apprentices. This financial burden deters individuals from pursuing these career paths.
 5. **Added Financial Supports for Apprentices and Employers:** To address financial barriers, there is a need for increased financial support for both apprentices and employers. This could include grants, scholarships, subsidies and tax incentives that make it more feasible for individuals to pursue apprenticeships and for employers to hire and train apprentices.
 6. **Removing Red Tape:** Bureaucratic hurdles and complex regulatory requirements can discourage both apprentices and employers. Simplifying the certification process, reducing unnecessary regulations and streamlining administrative procedures can make apprenticeship programs more accessible and appealing.
 7. **Impact Benefit Agreements with Mines:** Collaborate with mining companies and Indigenous governments to ensure that Impact Benefit Agreements are effectively implemented and that benefits, including training and employment opportunities, are realized. Advocate for transparency and accountability in Impact Benefit Agreements implementation to ensure that commitments are met and that local community's benefit from mining activities.

- **What should the Government of the Northwest Territories focus on to support and advance trades and occupational certification in the NWT?**

1. **Enhance the Schools North Apprenticeship Program:** Integrate trades-related curriculum in high schools to prepare students for apprenticeship programs. This includes offering hands-on workshops, mentorship opportunities and partnerships with local tradespeople.

Increase awareness of the Schools North Apprenticeship Program through outreach activities such as school visits, career fairs, and information sessions for students, parents and educators.

Provide incentives for students who enroll in the program, such as scholarships, stipends, or guaranteed job placements upon successful completion of the apprenticeship.

2. **Support Small Businesses:** Develop programs that allow apprentices to work in rotational terms with small private sector businesses. This can help address the seasonal nature of some trades and ensure continuous employment and training opportunities.

Offer grants, tax breaks or subsidies to smaller businesses that participate in the apprenticeship programs, helping them cover the costs associated with training apprentices.

Foster partnerships between larger companies and small businesses to share resources and expertise.

3. **Increase Visibility and Accessibility of Career Development Officers:** Ensure Career Development Officers regularly visit job sites, including those in remote and small communities. This can help build relationships with employers and apprentices, offering on-the-spot guidance and support.

Implement mobile career development units that can travel to various job sites and communities, providing resources and support where needed.

Utilize digital platforms to make Career Development Officers more accessible. This could include virtual office hours, webinars and online resources that apprentices and employers can access at any time.

4. **Strengthen Partnerships and Collaboration:** Work closely with industry partners, trade associations, and educational institutions to ensure that training programs are aligned with industry needs and standards.

Engage with local communities to understand their specific needs and challenges related to trades and certification, ensuring that programs are tailored to address these issues.

5. **Provide Comprehensive Support Services:** Develop mentorship programs pairing experienced tradespeople with apprentices to provide guidance, support and knowledge transfer.

Create support networks for apprentices, including counseling services, peer support groups and career coaching, to help them navigate the challenges of their training and career development.

6. **Promote Trades and Occupational Certification:** Launch public awareness campaigns highlighting the value and opportunities available through trades and occupational certification. Use success stories and testimonials to inspire and attract new entrants to the field.

Provide clear information on career pathways in trades, including the steps to certification, potential career advancements and long-term benefits.

- **How can the Government of the Northwest Territories increase the number of apprentices and certified Journeypersons in the NWT? In the small communities?**
 1. **Collaboration with Small Communities and Local Governments:** Workshops, seminars and outreach programs can be organized in small communities to promote awareness about the benefits of apprenticeships and the Schools North Apprenticeship Program. This can include information sessions, career fairs and partnerships with local schools and colleges to engage students early on.
 2. **Identifying Apprenticeship Opportunities:** Conducting surveys or assessments to identify the demand for various trades in small communities can help tailor apprenticeship programs accordingly. This data can also be used to connect potential apprentices with employers offering apprenticeship opportunities.
 3. **Support for Designated Trainers:** Providing resources and assistance to tradespeople who wish to become designated trainers can encourage more individuals to take on apprentices. This can include guidance on the application process, training on mentorship skills and incentives such as tax breaks or subsidies for training costs.
 4. **Promotion of the Schools North Apprenticeship Program and Student Matching:** Actively promote the Schools North Apprenticeship Program in schools and communities to attract students interested in trades. Establishing a matching system that connects interested students with employers offering Schools North Apprenticeship Program opportunities can streamline the process and increase participation.
 5. **Tool Incentives and Accessibility:** Providing incentives such as tool loans, subsidies for tool purchases or establishing a tool lending library can reduce barriers for individuals entering trades, especially in remote communities where access to tools may be limited. Ensuring accessibility to training facilities and resources is also crucial.
 6. **Streamlining Human Resources Processes for Schools North Apprenticeship Program Students:** Develop standardized procedures and guidelines for hiring **Schools North**

Apprenticeship Program students within Government of the Northwest Territories departments to streamline the hiring process.

7. **Baseline Courses and Industry Readiness:** Offer introductory courses in construction and other trades as part of school curricula to expose students to these fields early on. These courses can serve as a pathway to more advanced training and industry certifications. Work closely with industry partners to ensure that training aligns with industry standards and that job opportunities are available upon completion of training programs.
 8. **Increased Class Offerings and Exposure in Schools:** Increase the frequency of apprenticeship classes and workshops in small communities to accommodate more students and provide ongoing training opportunities. Collaborate with schools and educational institutions to promote apprenticeships as viable career paths and provide career counseling and guidance to students interested in trades.
- **What can be done to support innovative approaches to apprentice supervision given shortages of certified Journeypersons?**
 1. Continue to identify apprenticeship opportunities with new companies and uncertified trades people.
 2. Help trades people complete the Designated Trainer application, so they can take on an apprentice.
 - **What should be done to increase the number of women in trades and occupations in the NWT?**
 1. Continue to identify apprenticeship opportunities with new companies and uncertified trades people.
 2. Continued promotion and awareness directly marketed toward this demographic.
 3. Engage with education bodies to see if some of the basic tools' exposure classes can have a girl only cohort.
 4. Champion tradeswomen to travel to career fairs and talk about their experience as an apprentice.
 5. Partner with organizations to promote the hiring of women in the trades.

Next Steps

Feedback received and summarized in this report will help to inform the *Apprenticeship Trade and Occupation Strategy Extension*.