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# CASE STUDY INTEGRATING ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR SUCCESS Trade HERizons



## Key Facts and Information

**Name of Project:** Trade HERizons

**Organization:** Women's Network Prince Edward Island

**Issue:** Shortage of skilled workers in the trades in the province and low rates of participation among women

**Objective:** Increase the number of women who are prepared for trades training and jobs by integrating essential skills into services and training

**Essential Skills Tools Used:** Essential Skills Tools for the Skilled Trades

## About Trade HERizons

Prince Edward Island is facing a skilled labour shortage, yet few women occupy a position in a non-traditional job. Low participation rates by women in the trades are partly due to limited exposure to trades occupations, lack of awareness of skills needed to enter the trades and the belief that they may not have the skills needed to succeed in these types of jobs.

The Women's Network PEI, a non-profit organization that supports women in the province, launched the project **Trade HERizons** to help prepare women to enter trades and technology occupations. The project aims to help women in the province recognize the trades as a viable career option and address the shortage of skilled workers in the province. By offering career counselling services and training, Trade HERizons was designed to:

- Introduce women to the skills needed in trades occupations;
- Provide guidance as women explore trades and technology occupations;
- Provide support for women to complete their chosen training or Red Seal Exam; and,
- Offer support to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment in the trades.

## Implementation

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When the Trade HERizons project began, a Career Exploration and College Preparation course was made available to prepare women to enter formal trades training. The course content included theoretical knowledge in a classroom setting, hands-on learning opportunities at the local community college and practical experience on potential job sites related to trades and technology. During the course, participants developed their resumes and conducted labour market research to identify what occupation best fit their interests, needs and skills. The participants were also connected with experienced female trades' workers who could mentor and provide them with advice. In addition, the project included one-on-one counselling to provide the women with additional support. The Career Exploration and College Preparation program was delivered twice to approximately 23 participants.

Due to budget reductions, the project was changed to a five day Pre-Exposure to the Trades and Technology

Workshop to help women interested in learning about trades occupations. Over the five day workshop, facilitators explain what skills would be needed to work in specific trades. After completing the Pre-Exposure Workshop, interested participants could continue in the program by participating in additional workshops on developing action plans, goal setting, labour market research and through one-on-one career counselling. To date, the Pre-Exposure Workshop has been delivered five times to nearly 70 women.

The Women's Network PEI promotes Trade HERizons through media, online advertisements, information sessions with referring agencies and posters on various billboards. Since the project began, more than a dozen sponsors and many supporters, including industry associations, sector councils, and career counselling organizations have been promoting the project through their own channels and networks.

## Use of Essential Skills Tools and Resources

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In the early stages of the project, project managers realized that without a strong essential skills component, participants would struggle to succeed in the training. To address this concern, Trade HERizons managers worked with [Workplace Learning PEI](#), a non-profit organization that establishes workplace learning opportunities to identify essential skills tools that best fit the requirements of their program. After reviewing a number of tools from different sources, Trade HERizons managers decided to use the series of [Essential Skills Tools for the Skilled Trades](#) available on both the [Red Seal](#) and [Human Resources and Skills Development Canada](#) websites. These tools help participants understand how essential skills are used in the trades, assess essential skills needs and support skills development.

Below are examples of ways the project has integrated the essential skills tools:

**Awareness Tools help to inform about how essential skills are used in the trades and to identify the essential skills**

### WHAT ARE ESSENTIAL SKILLS?

The Government of Canada has identified key essential skills for the workplace. These skills are used in nearly every job and at different levels of complexity. They provide the foundation for learning all other skills and enable people to keep pace with their jobs and adapt to workplace change.

**required to succeed in those occupations.** For example, if after spending a day in the carpentry department at Holland College a client is interested in exploring that career option, they would be encouraged to read the tool [Essential Skills for Success as a Carpenter](#) as the next step in their labour market research.

**Needs Assessments help to identify essential skills strengths and areas to consider for improvement.** When women begin the five day workshop, they complete the

**Essential Skills Self-Assessment for the Trades** to assess their skills against statements that describe common trades-related tasks for the nine essential skills.

**Learning and Training Supports contribute to support essential skills development and enhance existing training**

**programs.** Based on the assessment results, instructors work with clients to develop a customized training program to improve their skills as well as share information on how to use essential skills in specific occupations. For example, participants used the **Vocabulary Building Workbook** to improve their vocabulary skills.

## Benefits and Impacts

The tools and resources provided several benefits to participants, training providers and employers including:

**Increased confidence among participants.** Assessing essential skills levels helped participants identify their strengths and areas that might need improvement. When participants had the guidance to increase their skills in line with the requirements of the occupation, their self-confidence and self-esteem increased leading to greater success in their program of choice and trade.

**Increased capacity of instructors to identify gaps and customize training programs.** Training providers found the tools and resources applicable to real-life settings, self-explanatory and user-friendly. The tools enabled instructors to customize their training programs to meet the identified needs of participants and ensure their continued success.

**Increased enrolment of women in non-traditional trades and technology programs.** After women have completed Trade HERizons, the program supports them to take technical training at Holland College. As noted by one representative *“the number of women enrolled in non-traditional programs doubled since the program began, which can be attributed in part to the program activities.”*

**Increased success in their program of choice and in their occupation.** Graduates of the first round of the program have gone on to successful careers in welding, plumbing, carpentry, and to other technology occupations such as in bio science, corrections and information technology.

**Increased job opportunities.** Over the long term, the project was successful in supporting women to attain higher paying jobs, helping them to establish a sustainable livelihood while also addressing the shortage of skilled labour in the province.

*“Trade HERizons has shown women what essential skills they need to work in the trades and many women have learned they have the ability to upgrade their skills and pursue a well-paid career in the trades. It’s been very empowering for them.”*

A representative of the Trade HERizons

**Increased capacity to recruit and retain skilled female workers.** Employers have reported that women make excellent employees in non-traditional trades and technology. They noted that the women they hired are focused and pay attention to detail, have great manual dexterity and eye-hand coordination, follow instructions well, are safety oriented, and deliver great customer service.

### Benefits for Participants / Workers

Increased self-confidence

Increased success in the training program and in their trade

Increased job opportunities

### Benefits for Training Providers

Access to free, practical, adaptable and easy-to-use tools and resources

Increased awareness of skills needed for trades occupations

Increased capacity to identify gaps and customize training programs to meet clients’ needs

### Benefits for Employers

Access to a broader base of talent and skilled workers

Enhanced employee engagement

Increased productivity

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

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Two of the biggest challenges of the Trade HERizons program were a lack of awareness of the importance of essential skills in the trades and of available resources related to essential skills. It took significant effort by project staff to find, review and use the essential skills tools and resources. Having the guidance from Workplace Learning PEI helped the managers of Trade HERizons to use and adapt the tools and resources to meet the needs of the participants and was key to the project's success.

### Practical Tips to Help You Get Started

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1. Learn about the skilled trades on the **Red Seal** website.
2. Learn about resources available to assess essential skills needs and support skills development. Find free profiles, quizzes, checklists, workbooks and more on the **HRSDC** website.
3. Find out how to make the tools work for you, take a look at **A Guide to Using the Essential Skills Tools and Resources** and learn about a simple three-step process to putting the tools into practice.

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**For more information on essential skills and related resources, visit [hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills](http://hrsdc.gc.ca/essentialskills)**  
**For more information on the Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program, visit [www.red-seal.ca](http://www.red-seal.ca)**

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