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# CASE STUDY INTEGRATING ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR SUCCESS Youth Targeted Labour Market Supply Initiative



## Key Facts and Information

**Name of Project:** Youth Targeted Labour Market Supply Initiative

**Organization:** British Columbia Industry Training Authority

**Issue:** Lack of interest among youth in pursuing a career in the trades and not fully informed of the skills required to enter trades training

**Objective:** Promote awareness of available apprenticeship programs and ease the transition from high school to apprenticeship training

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

**Other Tools Used:** ITA Essential Skills Online Assessment

## About the Youth Targeted Labour Market Supply Initiative

British Columbia's Labour Market Outlook 2010-2020 projects a growth in demand for workers that will exceed the growth in supply over the forecasted period. Despite expected labour shortages, British Columbia's **Industry Training Authority** (the organization responsible for leading and coordinating its provincial skilled trades system) reports that there has been a significant decrease in the number of youth participating in entry level apprenticeship training. The decline in the number of youth entering the trades is primarily due to a lack of awareness of the job opportunities in the trades and of the skills required to succeed in such jobs. To address this issue, the Industry Training Authority developed the Youth Targeted Labour Market Supply Initiative to:

- Increase awareness among youth of the job opportunities in the trades;
- Increase the number of high school students participating in industry training programs; and,
- Expand and strengthen the capacity of youth industry training programs.

## Implementation

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The initiative targets students from grades 6 to 12 in British Columbia through three programs:

**Youth Exploring Skills to Industry Training (Yes 2 It)** is an interactive, hands-on training program for students from grades 6 to 9 designed to increase awareness of the skills used in trades' careers. The program helps prepare pre-apprentices at a young age for what to expect when entering a career in the trades.

**Secondary School Apprenticeship (SSA)** is a program for students in grades 10 to 12 that enables students to begin the work-based training component of an apprenticeship

program while still in high school. Students obtain dual credits towards their high school diploma and their apprenticeship on-the-job training.

**Accelerated Credit Enrolment in Industry Training (ACE IT)** is a technical training program for students in grades 10 to 12. Students receive dual credit in the public school system and Level 1 Certification in a trade.

Since the launch of the Industry Training Authority youth programming, over 15,000 youth have participated in the three programs.

## Use of Essential Skills Tools and Resources

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As the initiative was being implemented, staff members of the Industry Training Authority recognized a need to integrate essential skills into the youth programs. Many students did not have a clear understanding of the skills required to complete apprenticeship training and how to be successful in a trades' occupation.

To fill this gap, the Industry Training Authority promoted the [Essential Skills Tools for the Skilled Trades](#) to introduce the concept of essential skills to school districts in British Columbia involved in providing apprenticeship technical training to high school students. As a result, many school districts have integrated the essential skills tools and resources in all three youth programs. The tools complement existing resources such as the [ITA Essential Skills Online Assessment](#) and are used to inform students

on how essential skills are used in the trades, assess essential skills needs and support skills development.

**Awareness tools help to identify skills requirements for jobs in the trades.** The essential skills tools provide students with a better understanding of what skills are required in order to enter trades' jobs and be successful. For example, [Using Essential Skills: On the Job with a Plumber](#) provides a description of a typical workday for a tradesperson and practical activities that use essential skills.

**Needs assessments help identify strengths and areas to consider for improvement.** Needs Assessments are integrated into the Accelerated Credit Enrolment in Industry Training (ACE-IT) program in a number of high schools. Students can use the [Essential Skills Self-Assessment for the Trades](#) to measure their progress against the requirements of the training program.

**Learning and training supports help to support essential skills development and enhance existing training programs.** Many instructors across the province have integrated the tools into their training. The use of essential skills tools such as the [Before Training: Resources to Improve your Essential Skills](#) can help students be better prepared for training through tips and activities to improve their 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.

*“Modifying our application process to include assessments of the students’ essential skills upfront and throughout the training has been very successful. The assessments using the tools have enabled instructors to hone in on what each cohort or group of students needs and to keep them on course to complete the training.”*

BC school district official

## Benefits and Impacts

The integration of essential skills into the three programs provided several benefits to youth and instructors including:

**Increased interest in apprenticeship training among youth.** Providing youth with a snapshot of the different trades’ jobs and the essential skills required helped to build interest in apprenticeship programs. For example, since its inception, the Yes 2 It program has led to an 88% increase in the number of Aboriginal students enrolled in public post-secondary apprenticeship programs and a 32% increase among non-Aboriginal youth.

**Increased capacity to identify gaps and customize training programs.** Instructors find the needs assessment tools quick and effective and the learning and training supports easily adaptable to respond to the learning needs of learners. The tools also help to capture and maintain the youth’s attention.

**Better prepared apprentices to succeed in their training.** Students and instructors became increasingly aware of the importance of acquiring the essential skills to enter trades training. The integration of essential skills into the pre-apprenticeship training has resulted in more British Columbia youth successfully completing their programs and being better prepared to enter trades training.

**More cost-effective programs.** Having access to free, easy-to-use and practical tools saved time and significant resources and contributed to more cost-effective programs.

**A more skilled workforce.** Over the long term, employers in the trades industry will benefit from having access to a more skilled workforce as youth will be better prepared to find and keep employment and be successful in their trade.

### Benefits for Youth

- Increased interest in apprenticeship training
- Increased completion rates
- Increased job opportunities

### Benefits for Training Providers

- Access to free, easy-to-use practical tools and resources
- Increased capacity to identify gaps and customize training programs to meet students’ needs
- More cost-effective programs

### Benefits for Employers

- Access to a skilled workforce
- Increased productivity

## Challenges and Lessons Learned

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There were a number of challenges and lessons learned from the initiative.

Most youth did not perform well when they first self-assessed their essential skills using the tools, which discouraged them from continuing. Providing one-on-one coaching from instructors or counsellors who had knowledge and expertise on essential skills helped students experience better results.

In addition, getting buy-in was easier when there was support from senior staff in the school system. It was difficult for the representatives involved in the project to obtain buy-in from the schools during the early stages of implementation. In response, the project staff distributed the tools to all school district officials, career counsellors, apprentice training managers, instructors and post-secondary institutions. Once the tools were proven to be successful, interest grew.

It was strongly suggested to provide pre-apprenticeship essential skills workshops for students before they enter an apprenticeship. This would save time and resources in apprenticeship training and allow employers to work on technical training rather than focus on teaching essential skills.

### 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.

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)

You can download this publication by going online: <http://www12.hrsdc.gc.ca>

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#### PDF

Cat. No.: HS18-37/2013E-PDF

ISBN: 978-1-100-21905-9