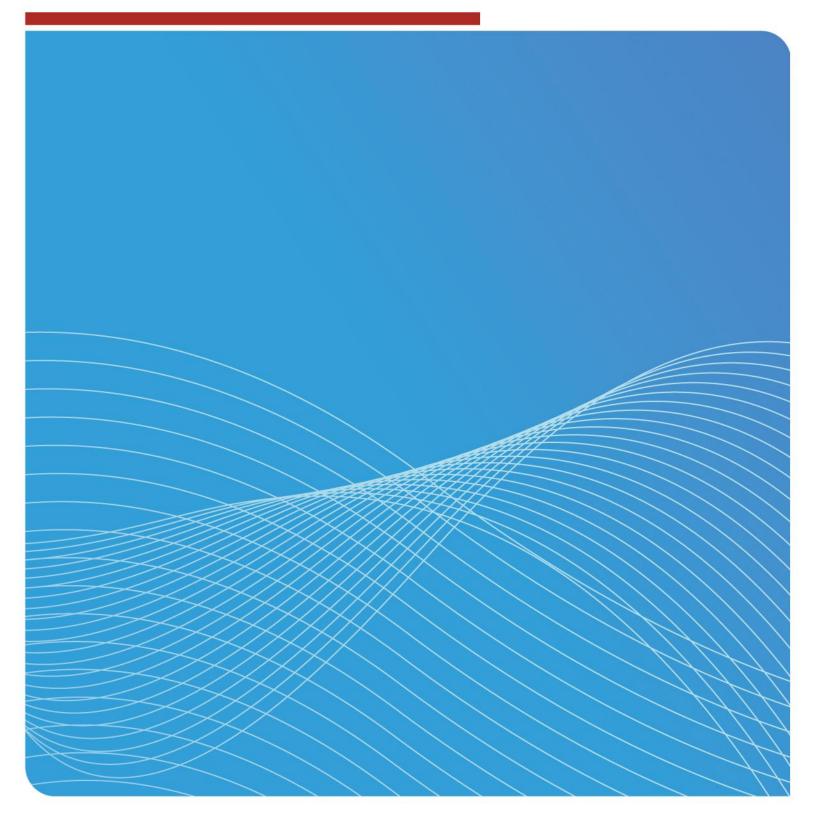


Lessons Learned & Next Steps

July 2012



Executive Summary

For more than 50 years, the Red Seal Program has been a recognized standard of quality for trades certification across Canada, with 52 skilled trades currently part of the program. The Red Seal Program has established pan-Canadian, industry-defined standards for skilled trades, and in doing so, has facilitated greater labour force mobility, with the Red Seal endorsement recognized both across Canada and internationally. The current Red Seal model is based on the development of National Occupational Analyses that support the development of multiple choice written examinations.

The CCDA administers the Red Seal Program and is comprised of one representative from each provincial and territorial jurisdiction with responsibility for apprenticeship, and two representatives of the federal government from Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC).

Over the past three years, the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship (CCDA) has been engaged in the **Strengthening the Red Seal** initiative – an initiative designed to strengthen the Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program by exploring enhanced standards and methods of assessment in addition to the multiple choice written examination.

The initiative was also designed to:

- Ensure the Red Seal Program continues to meet current and future labour market needs
- Ensure all skilled tradespeople have a fair opportunity to demonstrate competency
- Effectively assess foreign-trained workers critical to the future of Canada's labour market
- Reduce jurisdictional duplication
- Increase productivity a key to moving industry forward
- Support the transferability of skills between industries and occupations.

Over the past 18 months, the CCDA gathered information to inform the **Strengthening the Red Seal** initiative through two primary methods: pilot projects that focused on exploring multiple forms of assessment in addition to the multiple choice written examination, and a series of national consultations on enhancing the Red Seal endorsement process. Both have contributed to the exploration and development of innovative standards and assessment tools.

Multiple Assessment Pilots

The pilot projects – the first one for the Cook trade in British Columbia in 2008, followed by a national pilot for the Cook and Heavy Duty Equipment Technician trades in 2010, explored the use of multiple methods of assessment that could be effective in assessing skilled trades workers whose skills were gained outside of a formal apprenticeship program. The pilots provided valuable knowledge and experience to the CCDA and those member jurisdictions involved. The pilots tested the concept of using multiple forms of assessment against a common standard.

A key feature of the proposed occupational standard is the ability to support the development and use of multiple forms of assessment that reflect industry standards. The piloted assessment methods

included portfolios of evidence, written tests, practical tests and interviews with subject matter experts trained in assessment.

Jurisdictions that participated in the pilot assessments selected assessors for the pilots based on approved criteria (possession of a Red Seal, 10 years experience in the trade and several years experience in supervision or training). This resulted in a total of 22 assessors being trained as part of the pilot process. Trade challengers that participated in the pilots included 15 non-credentialed Cooks and 36 non-credentialed Heavy Duty Equipment Technicians whose experience in their trade met or exceeded the required number of hours for assessment eligibility in their jurisdiction.

In total, 51 challengers participated in the national pilot process to be assessed for competency at the Red Seal level. New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan participated in the Cook assessments, while Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and British Columbia took part in the Heavy Duty Equipment Technician assessments.

Of the 51 challengers, 27 were issued a Red Seal endorsement after their initial assessment. Reassessments of challengers who initially were unable to provide sufficient evidence of competency, have resulted in an additional seven challengers receiving their Red Seal endorsements.

Jurisdiction	Number of Challengers		# Competent on First Attempt		# Competent on Reassessment*	
	Cook	HDET*	Cook	HDET*	Cook	HDET*
British Columbia	N/A	25	N/A	16	N/A	0
Saskatchewan	5	6	0	6	3	-
Nova Scotia	6	5	3	1	2	0
New Brunswick	4	N/A	1	N/A	2	N/A
TOTAL	15	36	4	23	7	0

^{*} Totals as of March 31, 2012 **HDET = Heavy Duty Equipment Technician

The pilots determined that candidates faced with challenges – such as learning disabilities, language and cultural challenges, and foreign-trained workers – found the multiple forms of assessment to be both beneficial and accessible. As well, the pilots identified significant ways to reduce costs and streamline the process going forward.

The pilots also determined that the multiple assessment methodology is effective in identifying skills gaps – which creates the opportunity for remediation. As well, while the pilots focused on trades challengers, there appears to be significant potential application for using multiple forms of assessment in the apprenticeship stream as well.

In-person Consultations

Between June and October of 2010, the CCDA held in-person consultations across the country to engage stakeholders in a meaningful discussion early in the development of the **Strengthening the Red Seal** initiative. More than 300 people participated. The in-person consultations confirmed that the value of the Red Seal is in the rigour and quality of its standards and assessment, and that any enhancements to the program must maintain or increase this sense of rigour and quality.

In terms of assessment, there was general interest and support for exploring other ways to assess tradespeople in addition to the current written examination. Concerns existed around the costs associated with multiple forms of assessment, and in particular, who would cover these costs.

For the majority of participants, additional forms of assessment were generally believed to be most relevant to trade challengers, as they felt that assessment that takes place throughout apprenticeship is generally working well.

Participants also identified the need for consistency and for ensuring there were no short cuts to meeting the standards for trade challengers. Everyone must meet the same standard to receive their Red Seal. As well, participants wanted to ensure that focusing on trade challengers would not detract or take focus away from promoting apprenticeship training.

In particular, participants were supportive and interested in the following aspects of the **Strengthening the Red Seal** initiative:

- A move to a more practical-based assessment approach to demonstrate competency, while maintaining the multiple choice written examination
- Enhancing the approach for assessment of trade challengers that would be consistent across trades and jurisdictions
- Developing competency-based standards for the Red Seal trades
- The availability of national training tools
- Inclusion of Essential Skills in the trade standards
- Increased focus on stakeholder consultations, specifically the need for industry-driven standards development.

Participants had concerns about the following aspects of the **Strengthening the Red Seal** initiative:

- Identifying the scope of this project that would balance the costs and benefits associated with developing, implementing and maintaining an enhanced approach to assessment
- The costs associated with developing the occupational standards required to support enhanced assessment (format, content and specificity)
- The impact a new model would have on the current apprenticeship and training system
- The potential for this approach to lead to or promote trade fragmentation

- The costs associated with developing, managing and updating the competency units that make up a given trade
- The oversight of assessors to ensure consistency and integrity of assessment across jurisdictions
- The method to be used to integrate Essential Skills into the standards
- Fast-tracking challengers by making it easier to obtain a Red Seal, in particular for foreign trained workers

Online Consultations

For one month, from mid-June to mid-July 2011, the CCDA hosted an online survey with the goal of reaching out beyond those individuals who participated in the in-person consultations. Jurisdictions extended electronic invitations to stakeholders to complete an online survey about the **Strengthening the Red Seal** initiative. During this one-month period **1346** people participated, with representation from every jurisdiction, and including strong participation from tradespeople, employers, educators and labour representatives. Most participants were certified in their trade, had completed a formal apprenticeship program and held a Red Seal. Of those who responded, 30% were employers, 31% skilled tradespeople, 20% educators, 9% labour representatives, 4% association representatives, 5% government administrators and 1% apprentices.

There was strong support for the Red Seal, with 95% of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, "I value the Red Seal." When asked whether or not tradespersons they knew with a Red Seal were competent, 80% of respondents said they were.

On the issue of assessment, the survey presented participants with two scenarios to gauge the support for various assessment tools.

- In the first scenario, an apprentice had completed a four-year apprenticeship including 6,000 on-the-job hours, and classroom-based training and assessment.
- In the second scenario, a trade challenger had worked for 25 years in the trade but had not completed a formal apprenticeship nor been in the classroom for 25 years.

Participants were then asked to select the <u>single most important</u> form of assessment (portfolio reviews, written tests, practical tests and interviews with subject matter experts trained in assessment). In the apprentice scenario a practical test received the most support (41%), followed by a written multiple-choice test (31%). When asked to select the <u>single most important</u> form of assessment in the trade challenger scenario, a practical test (42%) again received the strongest support, with the written multiple-choice test receiving support from 41% of participants.

Overall, participants judged the practical test as the most important form of assessment for both trade challengers and apprentices. Employers concurred with this judgment for both groups, while labour representatives agreed the practical test was most important for trade qualifiers but felt that the written test was most important for apprentices.

The final section of the survey explored the topics of mobility and standardization. Participants expressed strong support for national standardization of assessment for apprentices and challengers.

Support for having a program that encourages the mobility of apprentices across Canada during the apprenticeship program was lower, but nonetheless supported by a majority of participants.

Recommendations

The pilots, and the in-person and online consultations confirmed that occupational standards are the foundation of the Red Seal Program. With these in place, it is possible to introduce a suite of assessment tools, including written and practical assessments, portfolio reviews and interviews with trained assessors. Stakeholders felt that it is crucial that standards be developed to allow for both a written examination and practical assessment.

To further develop the **Strengthening the Red Seal** initiative and incorporate the input and feedback from the pilots and consultations, the CCDA has constituted a taskforce. Over the next 12 months, the taskforce will continue to communicate with stakeholders to keep them informed of ongoing progress.

Next Steps

Currently, the CCDA taskforce is undertaking a cost analysis of multiple forms of assessment to provide stakeholders with an answer to a concern raised during consultations: "What will it cost and who will pay for it?" As well, the CCDA is conducting research to develop recommendations for enhanced standards format and development process. The CCDA is also conducting a feasibility study to investigate what, if any, limitations may exist that could stand in the way of implementing the enhanced model in provinces and territories.

At the end of this period, and based on the cost analysis and feasibility study, the CCDA will determine whether to pursue the development of other forms of assessment. If the CCDA does proceed, it is anticipated that another period of time (March 2013 to October 2014) will be spent designing an assessment framework before implementing additional forms of assessment.

Going forward, the CCDA's guiding principles for Strengthening the Red Seal initiative will include:

- Ongoing communication and collaboration with industry both jurisdictional and national
- Leveraging the strengths of the Red Seal Program
- Use of practical, simple, cost-effective solutions
- Basing all actions on evidence and best practices.

1. Introduction and Overview

For more than 50 years, the Red Seal Program has been a recognized standard of quality for trades certification across Canada, with 53 skilled trades currently part of the Red Seal Program. The Red Seal Program has established pan-Canadian, industry-defined standards for skilled trades, and in doing so, has facilitated greater labour force mobility, with the Red Seal designation recognized both across Canada and internationally.

The current Red Seal model is based on the development of National Occupational Analyses that support the development of multiple-choice examinations.

The Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship (CCDA) is the body that oversees the Red Seal Program. The CCDA is comprised of one representative from each of the provinces and territories that has responsibility for apprenticeship and trade certification, as well as two Federal government representatives. Provinces and territories participate in the Red Seal Program on a voluntary basis.

Over the past three years, the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship (CCDA) has been engaged in the **Strengthening the Red Seal** initiative – an initiative designed to strengthen the Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program by exploring enhanced standards and additional forms of assessment in addition to the multiple-choice written examination.

The initiative was also designed to:

- Ensure the Red Seal Program continues to meet current and future labour market needs
- Ensure all skilled tradespeople have a fair opportunity to demonstrate competency
- Effectively assess foreign-trained workers critical to the future of Canada's labour market
- Reduce jurisdictional duplication
- Increase productivity a key to moving industry forward
- Support the transferability of skills between industries and occupations.

The proposed **Strengthening the Red Seal** model places increased emphasis on performance criteria that are specific and measurable, and on multiple forms of assessment to foster increased pathways to Red Seal endorsement. The model uses enhanced standards that reflect not only industry performance expectations of what tasks are performed in a Red Seal occupation, but in what manner and how well they must be performed. Enhanced assessment tools collect evidence of performance against the enhanced standards, and use a variety of tools, including written and practical tests, portfolio of evidence, and interviews with subject matter experts trained in assessment.

The enhanced standard becomes the benchmark against which the enhanced assessment is conducted.

Over the past 3 years, the CCDA has gathered information to inform the **Strengthening the Red Seal** initiative through two primary methods: pilot projects that focused on exploring forms of assessment in addition to the multiple-choice written examination, and a series of national consultations on enhancing the Red Seal endorsement process – with both contributing to the exploration and development of innovative standards and assessment tools.

Goals of the Pilots and National Consultations

The goal of the pilots and the national consultations was the same – to provide information and input into the **Strengthening the Red Seal i**nitiative – an initiative that focused on enhancing and improving the Red Seal to ensure it continues to adapt to the needs of the labour market. The pilots were a pan-Canadian initiative that explored the use of occupational performance standards and enhanced forms of assessment to determine competency for certification. The pilots supported the **Strengthening the Red Seal** initiative that was approved by the CCDA to build on the success of the Red Seal Program.

The national consultations took place in-person and online, with more than 1300 individuals taking part.

Both the national consultations and the pilots provided valuable experience to the CCDA, with learnings from each applied to the broader discussion underway at CCDA to strengthen the current Red Seal Program by exploring a framework that supports, among other things, multiple forms of assessment against a common standard.

2. Enhanced Assessment Pilots

The first pilot project was conducted in 2008/2009 for the Cook trade, and was led by the Industry Training Authority in British Columbia. The pilot involved the development of standards (see below) and assessment tools with BC subject matter experts and the assessment of 49 challengers at the Red Seal level. The CCDA approved the use of the assessment for the issuing of Red Seals during the pilot and of the 49 challengers who participated, the ITA issued 24 Red Seals to individuals judged to be "competent".

In 2009 the Cook pilot was expanded nationally and a new pilot for the Heavy Duty Equipment Technician (HDET) trade was started. The expanded pilot was led by a national project team and supported by BC's Industry Training Authority, and included the development of standards and assessment tools, validation of occupational standards with CCDA jurisdictions, and assessment of Cook and HDET challengers in three participating jurisdictions.

2.1 Occupational Standards

For the purposes of the pilots, occupational performance standards were used. These standards include statements accepted by industry that describe effective performance in the workplace. They defined the skills required to do a job, were expressed in outcome terms and followed a standard format. For the pilots, the standards were expressed as units of competency that describe the activities a tradesperson would carry out at work and the specified skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to effective participation in the industry, industry sector and workplace. The standards were developed and validated by industry subject matter experts from across Canada.

The standards framework consisted of core (mandatory) units of competency, as well as elective units. This framework reflected the fact that tradespersons may have demonstrated competence in the breadth of the trade, but that certain areas of specialty will differ from tradesperson to tradesperson or jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

The occupational standards for the Cook trade were originally developed during the BC pilot (2008-09) and validated at the jurisdictional level by subject matter experts in six provinces and territories. Following development of the HDET standards in late 2009 and early 2010, a total of eight jurisdictions participated in the jurisdictional review/validation. Thirteen subject matter experts (SME) and instructors from across Canada took part in a national workshop in October 2010 to review the Cook and HDET draft standards to ensure they covered the breadth of each trade and contained sufficient detail to be used for assessment purposes. Essential to the process was the confirmation of core and elective units of competency for assessment purposes.

2.2 Assessment Tools

A key feature of the proposed assessment model is the ability for the standards to support the development and use of multiple forms of assessment reflecting industry standards. The assessment methods for the pilots included: portfolio review, written tests, technical interviews with trained assessors and practical tests. Multiple forms of assessment gather evidence on knowledge and practical skills to build a picture of an individual's competence.

Assessment tools for the Cook trade were developed during the BC Cook pilot in 2008 and validated during the October 2010 workshop. Assessment tools for the HDET trade were developed and validated during the October 2010 workshop.

2.3 Assessor Selection, Training and Moderation

Trained assessors (SMEs) are a key component of the enhanced assessment model. Their role in the competency conversation and practical test portions of the assessment is to collect evidence in order to determine the competence of a challenger. Assessors received training in advance on how to conduct an assessment. For the pilots, the qualifications for assessors included:

- Certificate of Qualification with an Interprovincial Red Seal endorsement in their trade
- A minimum of 10 years of relevant industry experience
- Some experience in a supervisory capacity.

Based on experience with the pilots, the best assessors are people who communicate effectively and can work efficiently with others. 'Expert' assessors with previous experience in the assessment process through their participation in the BC pilots, provided support to assessors throughout the national pilots, including training and moderation sessions, and pilot assessments.

An assessor training session was held in Ottawa in November 2010 for 22 assessors from New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Manitoba*, Saskatchewan and British Columbia. The training ensured that assessors had the knowledge, expertise and tools required to conduct effective assessments and deliver sound decisions. The training also promoted consistency of application of the assessment tools in all participating jurisdictions. Following the pilot assessments, an assessor moderation session was held in March 2011 to facilitate discussions on the assessment outcomes and to review the Cook and HDET standards and assessment tools. The moderation process focused on reviewing and making recommendations for continuous improvement to the assessment practices, tools, processes and judgments.

2.4 Challengers

Trade challengers, defined as individuals who have received their skills and knowledge outside the formal apprenticeship system, included non-credentialed Cooks and Heavy Duty Equipment Technicians whose experience in their trade met or exceeded the required number of hours for assessment eligibility in their jurisdiction. Challengers were from a range of backgrounds, including individuals with no formal training, individuals with formal training from other jurisdictions (including international), individuals previously unsuccessful in challenging the written examination for the Red Seal endorsement, as well as individuals with recognized barriers or anxiety when challenging a formal written examination process.

2.5 Pilot Assessment Results

The national pilot assessments were conducted between February and April, 2011 and in total, 51 challengers participated in the national pilots to be assessed for competency at the Red Seal level. New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan participated in the Cook assessments, while Nova Scotia, Saskatchewan and British Columbia took part in the HDET assessments.

Of the 51 challengers, 27 were issued a Red Seal endorsement after their initial assessment – 15 Cook challengers and 23 HDET challengers. Reassessments of those challengers who were unable to provide sufficient evidence of competency are ongoing, and as of mid-March 2012, an additional seven challengers had received their Red Seal endorsements.

Program Development Officers from each participating jurisdiction were responsible for the assessment administration, including recruiting challengers, assigning assessors, coordinating materials, and paying the costs of assessors (per diem, travel and accommodation), training facility rentals and supplies. The majority of assessments were conducted by two jurisdictional assessors supervised by an 'expert' assessor over a two-day period using facilities provided by training institutions. During the practical tests, Cook challengers were assessed in small groups and HDET challengers were assessed individually.

* Manitoba did participate in assessor training and moderation sessions, but did not conduct any pilot assessments of challengers.

Jurisdiction	Number of Challengers		# Competent on First Attempt		# Competent on Reassessment*	
	Cook	HDET**	Cook	HDET**	Cook	HDET**
British Columbia	N/A	25	N/A	16	N/A	0
Saskatchewan	5	6	0	6	3	-
Nova Scotia	6	5	3	1	2	0
New Brunswick	4	N/A	1	N/A	2	N/A
TOTAL	15	36	4	23	7	0

The initial HDET assessment results (64% success rate) are comparable to the 2010 average pass rates for trade challengers on the Red Seal examination for the trade (65%). For the Cook trade, trade challengers' pass rates on the Red Seal examination are higher (56%) than the success rate for initial assessments on the national Cook pilots (27%). However, many of the Cook challengers were judged 'not yet competent' in only a few 'units' and were successful on reassessment.

2.6 Reassessments

Reassessment occurred when a challenger was unable to provide sufficient evidence of competency in one or more units of competency after the initial assessment. Challengers are reassessed only on these units and can include a specific practical assessment, additional portfolio evidence, another interview with an assessor, specific training certificates or a combination of any of these components. Seven reassessments were performed in the Cook trade, after which all seven challengers were issued a Red Seal. All other challengers who were assessed as unable to provide sufficient evidence of competency (both for Cook and HDET), have not yet been reassessed.

2.7 Key Findings

Key findings from the pilots include:

- The assessment process is highly effective for challengers with learning disabilities, language and cultural challenges, foreign-trained workers, and other groups
- While the pilots were expensive to administer, it became clear there are significant opportunities to reduce costs
- Assessors are a key component of an enhanced assessment model
- Effective quality assurance is important with enhanced assessment
- Response from industry representatives was very favourable to all phases of the pilot they were involved in

- There may be an opportunity to use existing Red Seal examination questions for the knowledge assessment
- The standards format that was tested allows for mandatory areas of competency
- The 'skill recognition' approach appeared to have a positive impact on challengers
- The process was effective for identifying skills gaps this creates opportunities for remediation
- Effective challenger screening is important and could result in overall cost savings

In summary, the exploration of the multiple assessment approach through the national pilots was beneficial to challengers as well as to the CCDA and those jurisdictions that participated. During the pilots both strengths and challenges of this multiple assessment model were identified.

3. In-Person Consultations

During the spring/summer of 2010, the CCDA held 12 jurisdictional consultations across the country designed to engage stakeholders in a meaningful discussion early on in the process by sharing available information and asking for feedback regarding the **Strengthening the Red Seal** initiative.

Because CCDA was committed to reaching out to stakeholders at a very early stage in the process, there were a number of areas where detailed answers were not available. As a result, the discussions could not address all the questions and issues that emerged, which caused some frustration and concern on the part of some participants.

The design of the jurisdictional consultations was to first target internal stakeholders from apprenticeship and training programs across all jurisdictions, and then to immediately reach out to external stakeholders, such as jurisdictional and national industry representatives, followed by an online survey reaching out to an even broader stakeholder group. While this ensured a broad scope for the consultations, it did have some unintended consequences – namely a greater variance in the level of understanding and awareness in the room, and a perception by some stakeholders who had not been made aware of the consultations in advance that they had been excluded. This prompted the CCDA to add additional sessions to the schedule so it could address additional requests to participate. In total, 5 'national consultation sessions' were held in Toronto and Ottawa from June to October of 2010. The dialogue was very productive and allowed for good discussion of the proposed framework. See Annex 'A' for a listing of organizations that were present at these sessions.

In each session, participants were invited to follow along using a conversation guide that was prepared for them in advance and designed as a take-away to share with colleagues. The conversation guide contained results from a pre-consultation survey sent to participants invited to the jurisdictional sessions. Based on the shift that occurred in participation (as described above), the results were difficult to present (and interpret) with any degree of statistical validity, as many people in the room had not participated in the pre-consultations. This was mentioned in all of the sessions (National and Jurisdictional) and the results were used as a discussion starting point, without any conclusions made from the data.

The consultation sessions introduced participants to the **Strengthening the Red Seal** initiative and reviewed the transition from the current to the proposed model. The proposed model was then explored in further detail. A group discussion followed each topic. Participants were encouraged to share their concerns and identify any hurdles they thought may occur along the way.

3.1 Introducing the Strengthening the Red Seal Initiative

The consultation session started by introducing the **Strengthening the Red Seal** initiative, including a discussion of the drivers for the proposed model. The drivers (listed in alphabetical order) included:

- 1. An opportunity exists to reduce jurisdictional duplication.
- 2. Increased productivity is a key to moving industry forward.
- 3. Life-long learning and career progression is critical in today's labour market.
- **4.** The ability to effectively assess foreign-trained workers is critical to the future of Canada's labour market.
- **5.** Transferability of skills between industries and occupations (labour and learner mobility) is needed.

In most sessions across the country, participants were interested in learning more about why the CCDA was embarking on this initiative. While the drivers set out to provide an answer to this question, a number of participants still felt the rationale was not clearly articulated. In particular, participants experienced difficulty with driver #2 and driver #3. Participants thought these drivers represented outcome measures of the proposed program and were not necessarily drivers for initiating change. Questions were also raised regarding driver #4, with the main concern about temporary foreign workers who are not professionally trained and who do not possess permanent status in the country. Some participants thought that rather than focusing on attracting more temporary workers to the country, resources would be better directed to creating opportunities for the current workforce (which includes professionally-trained, permanent foreign workers).

Participants were clear, across all jurisdictions that support did not exist for changes that would "fast track" tradespeople by making it easier to obtain a Red Seal. They believed this would result in a diluted (or 'watered-down') certification that was not deemed to be an acceptable outcome.

3.2 From the Current to the Proposed Model

The current Red Seal model is based on the development of National Occupational Analyses (NOA) that supports the development of multiple-choice examinations. The proposed model is designed more broadly to support skill acquisition against industry-set occupational standards.

The proposed model places an increased emphasis on:

- Performance criteria (specific and measurable)
- Multiple forms of assessment (possibly including existing jurisdictional assessment)
- Flexible tools to better support jurisdictional training

Overall, support existed for the idea of evolving the current NOA into occupational standards. However, because there wasn't enough information for some participants, there was some hesitation to express

an opinion as to whether this was desirable or not. Concerns around the time and costs associated with the transition from NOA to occupational standards were expressed across the country. Participants shared the belief that the current NOAs are valuable documents that should not necessarily be discarded, and should be used to support any transition the CCDA is considering. Additional considerations included the infrastructure needed to maintain these standards and the manner in which they are written, in particular, the need for defining performance standards in user-friendly terminology.

3.3 Exploring the Proposed Model – Standards

3.3.1 Structure

The discussion around structure focussed on how the units of competency would be organized. At the core of the proposed model would be a library that contains all of the units, with each unit representing one module of learning, and multiple units making up a trade. Some units may appear in more than one trade (eg. Cook and Baker). Only when all units of competency of a trade have been achieved would a certification with a Red Seal endorsement be issued.

The conversation around structure covered many facets. While a majority of participants supported this concept in general, cost to design, implement and maintain such a library was at the forefront of most discussions. There was also apprehension around what some participants viewed as a "credit-based system". In particular, if a tradesperson were able to by-pass levels of apprenticeship based on credits – it was feared that on-the-job training would fall to the wayside.

In terms of the units themselves, participants inquired as to how a unit would be developed, especially those that would apply across multiple trades. A fear expressed by some was that trades might be diluted in the process of defining units common across more than one trade. Finally, participants wanted to know how quickly a unit could be changed in the current fast-paced climate, where standards and performance criteria are evolving rapidly.

3.3.2 Content

In the area of standards content, the session explored the concept of 'industry-wide' occupational standards that were organized more broadly along sector lines, better reflecting industry needs and the vision of where stakeholders see industry going. The discussion also examined what would be included in the standards. The presentation touched on Essential Skills (also referred to as generic or employability skills), knowledge (in particular theoretical and disciplinary knowledge) and attitudes (or personal attributes).

General support existed across all sessions for including both Essential Skills and knowledge in an enhanced occupational standards. There was less support for including attitudes (or personal attributes). The argument for not including them was based on the belief that by their nature, attitudes are highly subjective and open to individual interpretation. In particular, participants believed there are generational variations in attitudes and legal considerations when implementing such a subjective measure. There was common understanding that if attitudes were to be considered, the category would best be defined as an individual's attitude in relation to completing a task of their trade.

3.3.3 Development

In the area of development, the discussion centred on the need for effective consultation with industry and a well-defined process to facilitate participation and decision-making. Also explored in this section was the concept of developing standards from a family of trades perspective (sector) versus an individual trade perspective.

Overall, there was strong support for increased industry involvement. Having the right people at the table throughout the process was seen as paramount for success in developing occupational standards.

While the concept of developing standards from a family of trade's perspective was seen as having many benefits, the sentiment across most sessions was that this would be a challenge. In particular, excitement around the possible synergies between trades was tempered by caution around how complex these discussions would be and the difficulty in creating units that would apply to multiple trades, while maintaining their integrity at the individual trade level.

3.4 Assessment

On the topic of assessment, participants discussed the idea of gaining 'credits' once a unit is passed. The session further explored the idea that units not achieved could be reassessed and once passed, a credit would not be subject to reassessment at a future date.

The second part of the assessment discussion looked at the ways a standard would be assessed. The assessment tools presented included a written test, a practical test (demonstration of skill), verification of previous work experience and an interviews with subject matter experts trained in assessment.

Across all sessions, more support than opposition existed for an assessment approach that included multiple forms of assessment. That being said, there was no consensus on the appropriate mix of tools or in what situations certain assessment tools would work best. Across the sessions, participants called for maintaining some form of written test while recognizing the value of practical assessment.

Participants expressed concern about the effects of too much change to the assessment process, along with the costs associated with developing multiple assessment tools. Cost concerns focused on the need to have certified, trained assessors and the infrastructure to support a multifaceted assessment process.

In addition to the mechanics around assessment, the session also asked participants to consider whether jurisdictions should be able to issue the Red Seal using their own assessment tools, assuming they are accredited by the CCDA. Feedback on this question was mixed. In most sessions, participants expressed difficulty in making a firm decision based on the level of information available at this early point in the process. The main concerns expressed were with the costs associated with maintaining accreditation at the jurisdiction level and the potential for different standards across the country. If differences in the assessment approach were granted across provinces, there was concern that the level of rigour would fall substantially. A national assessment process was felt by many to be a sign of quality assurance.

The cost to the individual being assessed was also flagged as a key consideration. Participants felt it would be important that the new approach not be cost prohibitive for individuals seeking their Red Seal.

Another issue raised by participants concerned the assessors themselves. Participants wanted to know who would be responsible for the assessment of a tradesperson and indicated the need for an assessor to be nationally trained and equipped with several years of professional experience. The requirement to have an outside party come in and perform the assessment was mentioned by a few groups; some also mentioned that employers would not be suitable to administer testing due to their close relationship with their employees.

Participants who were in favour of accrediting jurisdictions shared a common view that it was similar to how some provinces are currently using their own methods of assessment. The proposed approach would improve the current situation based on the CCDA accrediting an organization before they are allowed to issue a Red Seal.

3.5 Training

On the topic of training, the sessions explored the opportunity to develop flexible tools at the Pan-Canadian level that could reduce duplication. Tools could be developed to support both the classroom (curriculum standards) and on the job training (apprenticeship monitoring).

Across all sessions there was strong support for the development of pan-Canadian tools that would reduce duplication while respecting jurisdictional differences. In particular, there was interest in national tools that covered statements of competency and performance criteria. Some groups mentioned that specific, measurable criteria would be important to incorporate into the development of these tools. If such national tools were to be developed, participants noted that they could include:

- Performance reviews based on a national standard
- On the job checklists/instruction manuals
- Learning resources such as common textbooks and a national curriculum

Concerns emerged around the costs associated with developing these national tools, in particular the reality that some jurisdictions lack the resources to develop training curriculum. There was concern that unless new funding was made available, money would need to come from other parts of the system to pay for new training tools. Leveraging online resources and promoting greater access and sharing among jurisdictions were ways suggested to deal with budget challenges.

Concern was also expressed around varying training requirements across jurisdictions, including curriculum standards, on-the-job training and hours of training required. Ensuring consistency in the application of national tools was seen as a key component for success.

3.6 Final Observations

At the end of each session participants were asked to identify the potential roadblocks and keys to success surrounding the proposed model. The following lists summarize the main ideas shared by participants:

Potential roadblocks/hurdles with implementing the proposed model:

- Lack of resources personnel, time, equipment, facilities and financial requirements
- Finding and training qualified, objective assessors
- Cost to the challenger for pursuing a multiple assessment approach
- Administration of occupational standards
- The feasibility of developing units that are common across trades
- The development of consistent assessment and training tools
- The impact of possible regulatory and legislative changes

Keys to successful implementation of the proposed model:

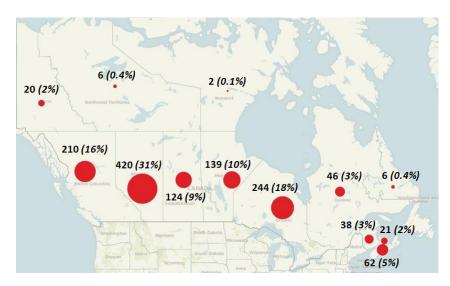
- Clear communication of the rationale and the objectives of the proposed approach
- Buy-in from all stakeholders (labour, trades, employers, educators etc.)
- Change management (i.e. managing expectations and resistance towards change)
- A concrete implementation strategy (phased-in over time)
- Maintaining rigour and quality of the Red Seal
- Jurisdictional accountability
- Clarifying industry roles
- · Appropriate level of new funding
- Continued pilots and communications of the results

4. Online Consultations

4.1 Consultation Process and Participant Profile

For a one month period, from mid-June to mid-July 2011, the CCDA hosted an online survey with the goal of reaching beyond those individuals who participated in the in-person consultations. Electronic invitations were extended to stakeholders to complete the survey, with a total of 1346 people participating. The invitations reached a diverse group including employers, labour and association representatives, skilled tradespeople, educators, government administrators and apprentices.

Returned responses came from each of Canada's 13 jurisdictions. The highest level of participation was from Alberta with 420 respondents, representing 31% of the total number of respondents. Participation was strong from each of the Prairie Provinces, and from the Yukon. Despite the different degrees of participation across the



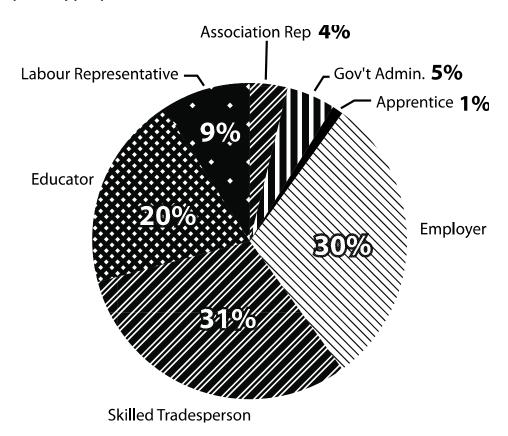
country, there were no significant differences in the results from each jurisdiction when compared to the overall results. This section of the report is based on the results from all survey participants.

Participants identified themselves as follows:

- 31% worked as a skilled tradesperson (411 participants)
- 30% were employers (396 participants)
- 20% were educators (260 participants)
- 9% were labour representatives (114 participants)

A comprehensive analysis was completed for each of these groups. Where notable differences in the results existed, these differences have been highlighted in the report. Results were also analyzed separately by different age categories and by those who had completed a formal apprenticeship versus those who had not. The data was further segmented to look specifically at skilled tradespersons who had gone through a formal apprenticeship program versus those who had not. Again, where significant differences arose, they are identified in the report.

Participation by perspective:



To better understand the profile of participants, the survey asked a series of questions around certification and the Red Seal. When asked whether or not participants were certified in their trade, 87% responded they were. This percentage was highest amongst skilled tradespersons (97%). Conversely, 78% of participants had completed a formal apprenticeship program and 70% held a Red Seal. As expected, skilled tradespersons ranked higher in each of these categories (89% and 85% respectively).

Participants were also asked about membership in associations and unions. Approximately one-third of respondents indicated they were members of employee associations and an equal number indicated they were a member of a trade union. These numbers varied amongst some of the participant groups. A significant portion of labour representatives indicated they were part of a trade union (97%), while considerably fewer employers indicated the same (14%). Labour representatives and educators also were more likely to be members of an employee association (52% and 64% respectively).

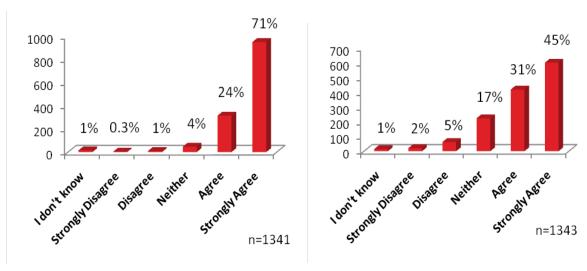
A majority of participants (69%) were over 46 years of age, with the largest group between 46 and 55 (41%).

Finally, participants were asked about their views on the Red Seal. Across all jurisdictions and all groups, there was strong support for the Red Seal. Almost 95% of respondents said they valued the Red Seal, with more than three-quarters (76%) saying that they now place an increased value on the Red Seal. When asked whether or not tradespersons they knew who had a Red Seal were competent, 80% said

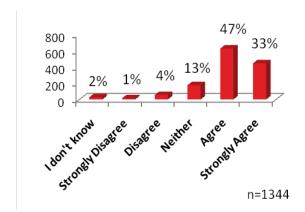
they were. These views about the Red Seal were consistent across all the major participant groups, age categories and apprenticeship status.

I value the Red Seal:

In recent years the value of the Red Seal has increased:



The Red Seal tradespersons I know are competent in their trade:



4.2 Assessment Elements of the Red Seal

On the issue of assessment, the survey set out to gather participant opinions on different forms of assessment. This section began by asking participants to indicate how strongly they agreed or disagreed that assessment to get the Red Seal should include the following assessment elements:

- Verification of previous work experience
- Written test
- Practical test (demonstration of skill)
- Interview with experienced assessor certified in their trade

Support was highest for an assessment approach that includes a written examination (96%); verification of previous work experience (96%); and a practical test or demonstration of skill (87%). Support for an assessment approach that includes an interview with an expert trade assessor was slightly lower (76%).

To gauge if participant views differed for individuals registered in an apprenticeship program versus trade challengers, survey respondents were offered two scenarios. Before presenting the scenarios, the following definitions around the pathways to receiving a Red Seal were shared with participants:

- 1. **Apprenticeship:** Apprentices typically complete a combination of in-school technical training and specified hours of work-based training, undergo assessment both in school and on-the-job and have the opportunity at the end of this to write the multiple-choice Red Seal examination. If they are successful they receive their Red Seal.
- 2. **Challenge Process:** Challengers (trade qualifiers) with existing experience have the opportunity to document their work experience and if they meet requirements (which usually include a set number of hours to demonstrate previous work experience) have the opportunity to write the multiple-choice Red Seal examination. If they are successful they receive their Red Seal.

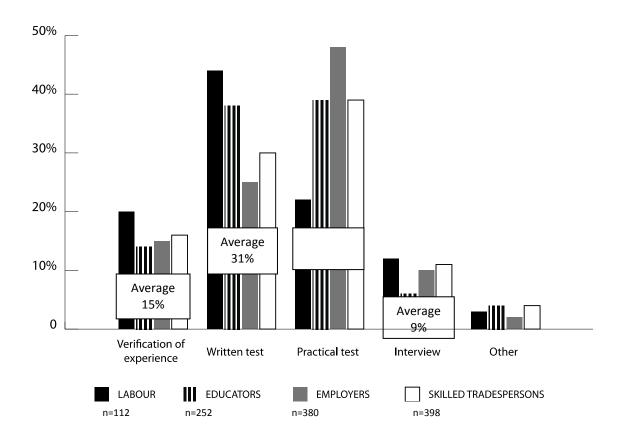
4.2.1 Scenario 1: Linda – Apprenticeship Program

In the first scenario, *Linda* had successfully completed a four-year apprenticeship program requiring 6,000 hours of on-the-job work experience under the guidance of a qualified tradesperson and had successfully passed all classroom-based training at a training institution.

In addition to her other apprenticeship requirements (on-the-job experience and classroom-based training), participants were asked to rate the importance of various forms of assessment for determining whether to award a Red Seal to *Linda*. Based on this scenario, a written multiple-choice examination received the strongest support (81%), followed closely by verification of previous work experience (79%) and a practical test/demonstration of skill (78%). While still garnering support from a majority of respondents, fewer participants agreed on the importance of an interview with a trade assessor (61%).

When asked to select the **single most important** form of assessment for *Linda*, a practical test received the most votes, selected by 41% of all respondents, followed by a written multiple-choice examination (31%), verification of previous work (15%) and an interview with a trade assessor (9%). The results varied somewhat by the four largest participant groups (see chart below). The biggest difference was amongst labour representatives who gave strong support to the written examination (44% in comparison to the overall average of 31%). Support for practical testing by this group also varied from the average (22% in comparison to the overall average of 41%). Differences for other participant groups were less pronounced. Noteworthy, however, was the support for practical test by employers (48% in comparison to the overall average of 41%) and support for the written examinations by educators (38% in comparison to the overall average of 31%). This group (educators) still ranked practical testing highest (39%) of all the assessment methods.

What is the most important form of assessment for apprentices?



Participants were then invited to provide any additional comments. A number of participants expressed support for some form of practical assessment. As one participant wrote:

"As a skilled tradesperson and employer, I feel practical testing is important to ensure that the training was done in compliance with industry standards. Work experience is very important, but if the skills are not being taught competently, then it doesn't matter how many hours have been put in. This is why practical testing in critical."

Another stated:

"You need to know your stuff, and with trades, the only way to do that is to demonstrate."

Some cautioned that practical tests would be difficult to administer and depending on the trade, not necessarily as effective as other assessment methods. They advocated that decisions around assessment tools needed to be made on a trade-by-by trade basis.

The second most recurring suggestion was to use a mix of assessment tools and that all of the methods have a potential role to play. The most commonly shared view was a mix of written and practical assessment tools, with one participant writing:

"Cognitive abilities for demonstrating knowledge and skills in the trades should be assessed through both practical and written assessments. Both are important."

Other participants shared the view that testing (practical or otherwise) after a formal apprenticeship program is redundant. These participants said that practical skills are proven on the job throughout the individual's apprenticeship (therefore negating the need for a practical assessment).

4.2.2 Scenario 2: Kevin – Trade Challenger

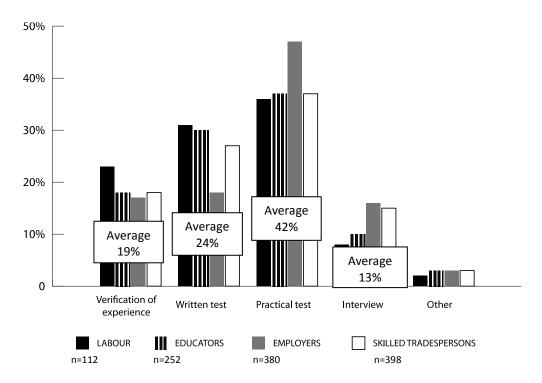
In the second scenario, *Kevin* had worked for 25 years in the trade but did not complete a formal apprenticeship. He had not been in a classroom setting for over 25 years, but now wished to be assessed for a Red Seal.

Once again, participants were asked to rate the importance of various forms of assessment for determining whether to award a Red Seal to *Kevin*. Verification of previous work experience received the strongest support (90%), followed by a practical test/demonstration of skill (84%). Support for interview with a trade assessor came in third (74%), while support for a written multiple-choice test fell to fourth (71%).

When asked to select the **single most important form** of assessment for *Kevin*, once again a practical test received the most votes overall, selected by 42% of respondents. In fact, the order was the same as that selected for *Linda*. A practical test was followed by a written multiple-choice test (24%), verification of previous work (19%) and interview with a trade assessor (13%). As was the case with Linda, those who did not complete a formal apprenticeship program demonstrated notably less support for a written examination.

When examining the data of the four largest participant groups, it was found that the results for *Kevin* varied less than those for *Linda*. In fact, each of the groups ranked the assessment tools in the same order as they did for *Linda*. There was somewhat less support for practical testing (36%) and greater support for written tests (31%) by labour representatives when compared to the overall average percentage. Employers also expressed a difference in levels of support, with greater support for practical testing (47%) and lower support for written tests (18%) when compared to the overall average percentage.

What is the most important form of assessment for trade challengers?



When participants were asked to provide additional comments about the second scenario, many expressed a desire for a combination of assessment approaches to determine whether a challenger would be eligible to receive a Red Seal. There was strong support for the use of all four assessment approaches, with one participant stating:

"The verification of work experience is extremely important, as are the written and practical tests to verify their knowledge of the trade, as is an interview with a qualified assessor. There should be no short cut to trade certification."

Others called for various combinations of the assessment tools, with the written multiple-choice examination and practical examinations most popular. One participant wrote:

"Some individuals are good at writing tests, but cannot perform up to the Red Seal standard in the field. A demonstration of knowledge would be required in this example, as well as the required examination."

Some participants expressed strong views on the importance of formal apprenticeship programs and schooling for challengers, explaining:

"Kevin needs to be an apprentice, go to school, and pass his tests. Apprenticeship hours would be waived based on his previous work. I have seen this situation many times. Information gained in the classroom is important and is never picked up on the job. Without it, Kevin only has half the knowledge required for his Red Seal."

4.3 Standardization and Mobility

The final section of the survey explored the topics of mobility and standardization. Participants expressed strong support for national standardization of assessment for apprentices and challengers (90% and 89% respectively). Support for having a program that encourages the mobility of apprentices across Canada during the apprenticeship program was lower (60%), but nonetheless supported by a majority of participants. The results were almost identical across all four largest participant groups, each responding with similar levels of support. This support was strongest from skilled tradespersons who did not complete an apprenticeship program.

4.4 Final Observations

At the end of the survey participants were asked to provide any final comments. The following list is based on a categorization of all the input received. The themes provide valuable insight into stakeholder reaction to the proposed model.

Legitimacy and Quality of the Red Seal

Participants believe in the system and that the system has value. There is a desire to see this value maintained and for that to happen, there is a recognition that strengthening the current approach is positive. Maintaining the integrity of the Red Seal is of paramount importance; quality must be assured.

Assessment Tools

There were a number of comments around assessment tools and the approach for assessing individuals. Overall, there was strong support for maintaining a written examination. The reasons ranged from the need to understand the theory behind each trade, to the need to demonstrate the challenger or apprentice is able to read in English or French. Also highlighted as important by a number of participants was that a written examination provided a consistent method for assessing tradespersons across the country.

Assessment Approach

The main concern around the assessment approach related to assessment criteria and assessors. Participants believed that standards and assessment criteria should be set by industry. In addition, participants were concerned about who would perform the role of assessor, calling for mandatory requirements (i.e. a Red Seal), oversight from a central body and on-going training for this group.

Other comments about the assessment approach focused on the costs and practicality of new assessment tools, how differences across trades would affect a multiple assessment approach, and how we decide what is equivalent when looking at different assessment approaches across the country.

Complementary Measures

Participants were eager to share measures they felt would strengthen the program. First and foremost amongst them was the desire to support the growth and success of the current apprenticeship program. This was seen as a fundamental building block for a successful Red Seal Program. While a majority of participants felt the apprenticeship program was strong, there were those that felt there was room for improvement. In both cases however, the apprenticeship program was recognized as very valuable.

Standardization was another important element discussed by participants. This included education and training curriculum as well as testing. Participants felt that having national standards was a key to moving in this direction. Furthermore, there were concerns around the differences in assessment that currently exist from jurisdiction to jurisdiction.

5. Conclusion

Over the past three years, the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship (CCDA) reached out to its member jurisdictions and industry stakeholders to discuss the proposed direction of the Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program and to gather information and feedback on an enhanced standards and assessment model through both national consultations (in-person and online) and pilots.

The key objectives of both activities was to learn more about ways to strengthen the Red Seal Program – from both a practical perspective of testing what worked and a more theoretical perspective of including a wide variety of participants into the early thinking about the approach – to gather information about how to shape the initiative as well as where support and opposition may exist. The national consultations informed stakeholders about the work that had been done to date and provided an opportunity to share ideas about the key challenges and important considerations CCDA should keep in mind as it moved forward with the initiative. The pilots provided the opportunity to test the thinking in a practical setting and use the learnings to guide future activities.

Overall, the consultations revealed cautious optimism amongst stakeholders and clear support that a strengthened Red Seal Program would benefit the trades, while the pilots received strong support for the enhanced assessment approach. In the consultations, there were some reservations expressed about cost and value for money, and some participants required more answers than were available at such an early stage in the development of the initiative — a by-product of engaging stakeholders at an early point in the process where the discussion is still focused on concepts and possible scenarios, rather than on a final, fully articulated approach.

The pilots allowed for the concepts to be further developed, tested and refined – and provided first hand experience and learning on the use of multiple methods of assessment in assessing trade challengers, internationally trained workers, and individuals with learning disabilities, language or cultural challenges. The competency-based approach to assessment also allows for the identification of skills gaps and the opportunity for challengers to pursue additional experience and training.

6. Next Steps

The results of the pilots and consultations paint a very compelling case for strengthening the existing standards format and development process used for the Red Seal Program. It was also evident from the national consultations that there is concern about whether it is cost feasible to administer enhanced forms of assessment in the future. During the pilot, a number of significant potential cost-savers were identified, and there is now sufficient experience among other certification bodies that more cost-feasible models of enhanced assessment administration could be developed.

At their October 2011 meeting, the CCDA approved the following activities in the short term (October 2011 – March 2013):

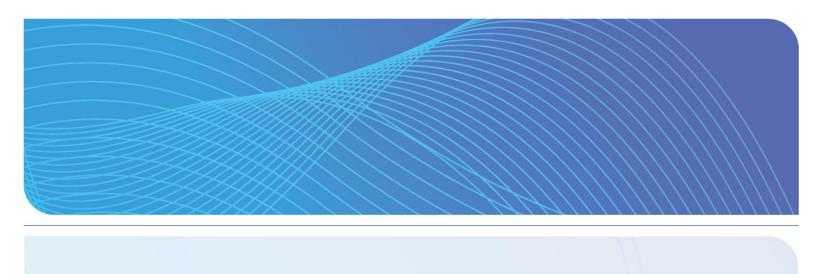
- Determine the optimal format and development process for national standards. Research will be conducted on the format and development process that will best serve the needs of the Red Seal Program. The current standard (NOA) will be compared to other models to determine how it could be improved. The enhanced standard would also be explored to determine how it could support both the development of the interprovincial Red Seal examination as well as other forms of assessment, in addition to allowing for other potential future uses.
- Undertake a cost analysis of current and enhanced assessment methods. Costs of both the existing (Red Seal examinations) and the enhanced methods of assessment used in the pilots will be studied, and options to streamline assessment tool development and assessment delivery will be examined.
- <u>Undertake a feasibility study</u> to determine what barriers, if any, exist within the jurisdictions that could stand in the way of implementation.
- Continue the ongoing commitment to engage and communicate with internal and external stakeholders. Communication products currently under development include a dedicated web page on the Red Seal website (red-seal.ca).

The CCDA wishes to sincerely acknowledge and thank the participants from the national consultations and the pilots for their commitment, contributions and passion in helping to advance Canada's Red Seal Program.

Participant Organizations - National in-person consultations, 2010

- ArcelorMittal Dofasco
- B.C. and Yukon Territory Building and Construction Trades Council
- Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council
- Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF)
- Canadian Automotive Repair and Service Council (CARS)
- Canadian Aviation Maintenance Council (CAMC)
- Canadian Building Trades (BCTD)
- Construction Sector Council (CSC)
- Canadian Construction Association (CCA)
- Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA)
- Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)
- Canadian Nursery Landscape Association
- Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (CTHRC)
- Canadian Vocational Association (CVA)
- Electricity Sector Council (ESC)
- Finishing Trades Institute
- Forest Products Sector Council
- Halton Industry Education Council
- Installation, Repair and Maintenance (IMR) Sector Council and Trade Association
- International Association of Machinists (IAM)
- International Brotherhood of Boilermakers (IBB)
- Boilermakers National Training Trust Fund
- International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW)
- International Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers (BAC)
- International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE)
- Laborers' International Union of North America (LIUNA)

- Manitoba Building and Construction Trades Council
- Mechanical Contractors Association of Canada (MCAC)
- Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
- Motor Carrier Passenger Council of Canada (MCPCC)
- National Electrical Trade Council (NETCO)
- Ontario Building Trades
- Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL)
- Ontario Pipe Trades Council
- Ontario Sheet Metal Workers Training Centre
- Post-secondary Education of British Columbia
- Provincial Sheet Metal Workers Training Trust Fund
- Operative Plasterers and Cement Masons International Association (OPCMIA)
- Quebec Building and Construction Trades Council
- Refrigeration Workers of Ontario
- Sheet Metal Workers' International Association (SMIA)
- Sprinkler Fitters of Ontario
- UA Training Centre
- UA/MCA Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee of NB Inc.
- United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry of The United States and Canada (JTAC)
- United Association Union of Plumbers, Fitters, Welders and HVAC Service Techs Canada
- United Brotherhood of Carpenters (UBC)
- United Steelworkers (USW)
- West-Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC-AFPC)



RED SEAL PROGRAM

Labour Market Integration Directorate
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada
140 Promenade du Portage
5th floor, Phase IV
Gatineau, Quebec
K1A 0J9

Telephone (toll free) 1-877-599-6933 Teletypewriter 1-800-926-9105 Fax 819-994-0202

Or by e-mail at: redseal-sceaurouge@hrsdc-rhdcc.gc.ca