



# EVALUATION OF THE SKILLED TRADES AWARENESS AND READINESS PROGRAM

Final Report

February 2023



Evaluation of the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program

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## Executive Summary

### Overview

This report presents the findings and recommendation of the formative evaluation of the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program.

This Program encourages Canadians, particularly those facing barriers, to explore and prepare for careers in the skilled trades. Equity-deserving groups include youth, women, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, persons with disabilities, and racialized communities.

The Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program supports pre-apprenticeship programs. As such, its goal is to encourage career exploration leading to full-time employment in the skilled trades or an apprenticeship training opportunity.

#### The Program funds projects across Canada that seek to:

- build awareness of trades as viable, good-quality careers;
- help equip individuals with the skills, supports and work experience they need to pursue a career in the skilled trades; and,
- provide opportunities to explore trades.

#### Activities funded under the Program include:

- Career exploration opportunities to support well-informed career decisions (e.g., career fairs, in-school introduction);
- Skills training to better prepare individuals for success (e.g., essential skills training, safety certification);
- Work experience to offer hands-on job experience and connections to employers (e.g., work placements).

This formative evaluation of the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program assesses its design, delivery, and early results. Specifically, the evaluation covers the 13 projects that received funding during the fiscal years from 2018-2019 to 2021-2022 in order to comply with the *Financial Administration Act* and the Policy on Results.

### Main Findings

#### Almost all funding recipients were satisfied with the funding allocation process and monitoring of the project's implementation

- Almost all funding recipients interviewed expressed satisfaction with the adequacy and timeliness of the funding they received.

#### Incomplete information was collected over time to track performance measurement

- Due to the absence of data on some indicators, there is a need to adjust the data collection strategy in order to more effectively collect comprehensive data to measure the achievement of Program outcomes.

### **Activities implemented in the funded projects focused on awareness building, skills training, and work experience to strengthen pre-apprenticeship**

- The Program funded 13 projects included in the scope of this evaluation. Most of them (69%) implemented more than one type of activity.
- Among these funded projects, 10 projects (77%) provided skills training, 9 projects (69%) provided awareness activities, and 6 projects (46%) focused on work experience.

### **Participants in funded projects reported that carried out activities helped prepare them to enter a skilled trade**

- During the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 fiscal years, funded awareness activities reached about 12,700 individuals. In addition, 3,070 participants took part in skills training and 488 participated in work experience activities.
- The majority of participants reported that, as a result of their participation in funded activities, they gained the information, skills, support, and confidence to make a decision to go into and be successful in a career in a trade.
- Funded recipients and project participants also said that the funded activities helped to change participants' perceptions of skilled trades.

## **Recommendation**

The evaluation found that incomplete information had been collected in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 to track the Program's performance in terms of its outreach and outcomes, such as increased awareness of skilled trades and increase of skills.

The evaluation recommends that the Program performance measurement strategy ensure the collection and reporting of relevant,<sup>1</sup> accurate<sup>2</sup> and coherent<sup>3</sup> data and information, facilitated by the mandatory participation of funding recipients in the annual reporting process and data validation.

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<sup>1</sup> Relevant means useful for performance measurement, information which matter in the context.

<sup>2</sup> Accurate means information is representative of the targeted measurement, covering the required population and period of reference.

<sup>3</sup> Coherent means information is consistent over time, between region and across sub-populations.

## Management Response and Action Plan

### Overall Management Response

Employment and Social Development Canada's Skills and Employment Branch (SEB) and Program Operations Branch (POB) would like to thank the individuals who contributed to the evaluation of the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program, particularly the members of the Evaluation Directorate, as well as all interview participants who provided their insights as part of this evaluation.

The results of the evaluation were generally positive. They accentuated the importance of the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program in helping Canadians obtain the information, skills, support, and confidence to make a decision to make a career or to continue working in a trade. The evaluation highlighted that the Program helped to change perceptions of skilled trades, and break down barriers faced by individuals of equity-deserving groups. Finally, the evaluation noted that all funded projects contributed to participants considering pursuit of an apprenticeship or a career in the trades.

Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program is now delivered as an initiative under the Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy framework. Announced in 2019, the Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy aims to support a trades workforce that is skilled, inclusive, certified, and productive, through measures that:

- Promote the skilled trades as a good career option;
- Help Canadians explore, prepare for, participate, and succeed in apprenticeship;
- Facilitate the participation of employers and unions in apprenticeship; and
- Encourage innovative tools and approaches to better prepare pre-apprentices, apprentices and journeypersons for the jobs of tomorrow.

### Recommendation

The evaluation found that incomplete information had been collected in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 to track the Program's performance in terms of its outreach and outcomes, such as increased awareness of skilled trades and increase of skills.

The evaluation recommends that the Program performance measurement strategy ensure the collection and reporting of relevant<sup>4</sup>, accurate<sup>5</sup> and coherent<sup>6</sup> data and information, facilitated by the mandatory participation of funding recipients in the annual reporting process and data validation.

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<sup>4</sup> Relevant means useful for performance measurement, information which matter in the context.

<sup>5</sup> Accurate means information is representative of the targeted measurement, covering the required population and period of reference.

<sup>6</sup> Coherent means information is consistent over time, between region and across sub-populations.

### Management Response

Management agrees with this recommendation.

When the Program was introduced in 2018-2019, funding recipients were required to submit two different types of quarterly reports:

- reports on progress made in activities, finances, results, and participants' success stories; and
- data reports containing quantitative information gathered in exit interviews and post activity surveys reporting on participation in activities and associated benefits.

The data collection process was conducted by phone and email, and posed a significant administrative burden on both the Department and funding recipients. The Department took successive steps to reduce this burden. First, it migrated to online collection of quarterly reporting of quantitative and qualitative results. Later, it implemented an annual results questionnaire to align with Departmental results reporting requirements. This greatly reduced the reporting burden, however due to the successive changes, there was some initial instability in the data collection questionnaires. Consequently, some data elements were inconsistently collected in the early years of the program.

With the shift to delivering the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program (STAR) as an initiative under the Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy framework, the Program's key performance indicators are being realigned to the new performance measurement strategy. The Skills and Employment Branch will use this opportunity to review the design of the STAR results questionnaire to ensure that the data collected is relevant, accurate and coherent.

Regarding the mandatory participation of funding recipients in the annual reporting process and data validation, the Department has recently taken measures to:

- provide more information during the information sessions for Calls for Proposals to highlight recipient roles and responsibilities in data collection and reporting;
- provide more guidance to the recipient during the negotiations and signing of the agreement, where the content of the agreement including clauses and the reporting requirements, are explained; and
- underscore these responsibilities when the annual questionnaire is distributed.

The Skills and Employment Branch and Program Operations Branch will monitor the impact of these changes on improving the response rate for the 2023 questionnaire (to collect 2022-2023 results) and make additional adjustments in future years as needed.

<b>Management Action Plan</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
1.1 Review the design of the STAR results questionnaire to ensure that the data collected is relevant, accurate and coherent.	March 2024
1.2 Continue to monitor the impacts of the changes in the policy of the mandatory participation of the funding recipients.	September 2024



## 1 Introduction

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This report presents the findings and recommendation of the formative evaluation of the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program.

- This Program encourages Canadians to explore and prepare for careers in the skilled trades. The objective of the formative evaluation of this Program is to assess its design, delivery, and early results.

This evaluation covers the period from the Program's launch during the fiscal years from 2018-2019 to 2021-2022. It was completed in compliance with the *Financial Administration Act*, and the Policy on Results.

This evaluation approach<sup>7</sup> addresses five evaluation questions and uses three lines of evidence: (1) a document and project files review (including Program performance information<sup>8</sup> from the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 annual Apprenticeship Programs reporting processes<sup>9</sup>), (2) the focus groups and (3) key interviews with Program officials and funding recipients.

## 2 Program Description

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### 2.1 Program background

The Government of Canada invests nearly \$1 billion<sup>10</sup> per year in apprenticeship supports through:

- contributions, grants, loans and, tax credits
- Employment Insurance benefits during in-school training
- The Red Seal Program



Budget 2018 announced the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program which is intended to supplement existing apprenticeship programs including:

- the Union Training and Innovation Program,<sup>11</sup> especially Stream 2, the objective of which is to support innovative approaches and strengthen partnerships to address apprenticeship challenges in the Red Seal trades;
- the Women in Construction Fund, by providing wrap-around supports to women pre-apprentices. This Fund ended on March 31, 2022.

Through this Program, the Government of Canada aims to fulfill its role in supporting a strong national labour market by supporting innovation, scale up successful pre-apprenticeship program models, and provide greater reach across the country.

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<sup>7</sup> More information on the evaluation questions and lines of evidence can be found in Appendix D.

<sup>8</sup> In 2019-2020, annual performance data collected from funding recipients resulted in the Apprenticeship Programs Annual Report. The 2020-2021 Annual Report was not available for this evaluation. However, raw data were provided. For 2021-2022, no annual report or performance data were available for the evaluation.

<sup>9</sup> Resulting from the 2020-2021 questionnaire completed by the funding recipients of the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program.

<sup>10</sup> [Government of Canada announces new partnership to create at least 5,200 more apprenticeships in Atlantic Canada](#)

<sup>11</sup> The [evaluation](#) of the Union Training and Innovation Program was completed and published in April 2022.

The Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program is also consistent with the Department of Employment and Social Development's mandate to improve the standard of living and quality of life of all Canadians by promoting a highly skilled and mobile labour force, and an efficient and inclusive labour market.

Specifically, the Program aims to address a gap in governments' programming by increasing participation in pre-apprenticeship programs and addressing barriers preventing people from entering and being successful in apprenticeships.

These barriers<sup>12</sup> include:

- Limited numbers of fully funded places and long waiting lists for registration in programs offered by organizations;
- Various provincial and/or territorial regulations that inhibit program across jurisdictions;
- Limited number of places in shops to complete training;
- Lack of interprovincial recognition for the training of participants wishing to continue their education;
- Lack of professional development for faculty members;
- Difficulty for participants to find work placements after participating in pre-apprenticeship programs.

**Equity-deserving groups include:**

youth, women, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, persons with disabilities, and racialized communities.

The Program encourages Canadians, particularly those facing barriers, to explore and prepare for careers in the skilled trades. It funds projects across Canada that seek to build awareness, provide opportunities to explore trades, and help individuals acquire skills.

In addition, the Program supports the Government of Canada's commitment to work with provinces, territories and post-secondary institutions to develop or expand pre-apprenticeship<sup>13</sup> programs offered to varying degrees across Canada. In that regard, the Program helps to fill identified gaps such as:

- The limited number of pre-apprenticeship programs for Indigenous peoples outside the Western provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba);
- The limited availability of pre-apprenticeship programs for newcomers in the provinces and territories.

The Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program objective is to build on existing programs to familiarize Canadians with trades, particularly Canadians from equity-deserving groups who face barriers preventing them from going into a trade.

<sup>12</sup> (Colleges and Institutes Canada and Canadian Apprenticeship Forum 2020)

<sup>13</sup> Pre-apprenticeship program refers to any program that could lead to an apprenticeship but will not involve registering as an apprentice or having an employer sponsor.

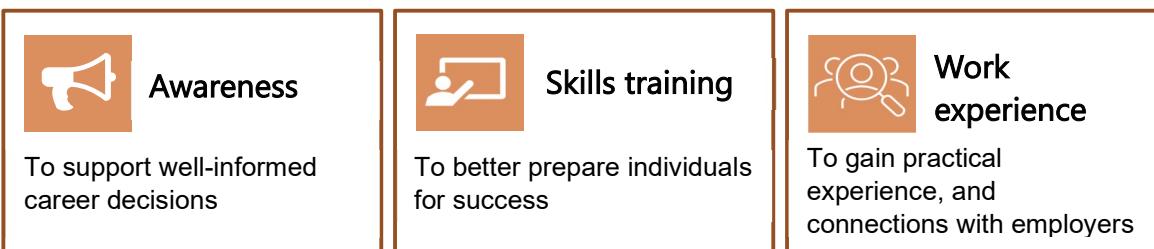


### Key statistics on equity-deserving groups according to the 2015 National Apprenticeship Survey:<sup>14</sup>

- The majority of apprentices were under 25 years of age (52.8%), were men (86.3%) and were Canadian-born (91.3%) when they started an apprenticeship.
- **Women** accounted for 13.7% of apprentices and were concentrated in a few trades such as early childhood educator, hairstylist, and cook.
- **Apprentices who reported a having a disability** before registering for an apprenticeship and at the time of the survey accounted for 2.9% of apprentices.
- **Immigrants** accounted for 8.7% of apprentices, less than half of their share of the Canadian population.
- **Apprentices from a visible minority** accounted for 8.2% of apprentices, which was also less than half their share of the Canadian population.
- **Indigenous apprentices** accounted for 6.3% of all apprentices in 2015, a slightly higher percentage than their share of the Canadian population.

The Program focused on pre-apprenticeship projects that included three types of activities.

**Figure 1: Types of Program Activities**



**Source:** ESDC – Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program document and project files review

The Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program-funded activities are in keeping with the description of pre-apprenticeship program components, as presented by the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum.<sup>15</sup> The components include essential skills and employability skills upgrading, safety training, hands-on experience with tools, and a work placement.

These activities are important in meeting the goal of pre-apprenticeship programs to encourage career exploration leading to full-time employment in the skilled trades or an apprenticeship training opportunity.

<sup>14</sup> [National Apprenticeship Survey: Canada Overview Report 2015](#)

<sup>15</sup> (The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum – Forum canadien sur l'apprentissage (CAF-FCA) 2020). The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum is a national non-profit organization built on the collaboration of employers, unions, educators, jurisdictional apprenticeship authorities and equity-seeking groups. They are the only organization that brings together apprenticeship stakeholders from across trades, across sectors and across Canada to share information and promising practices, identify challenges and propose joint solutions.

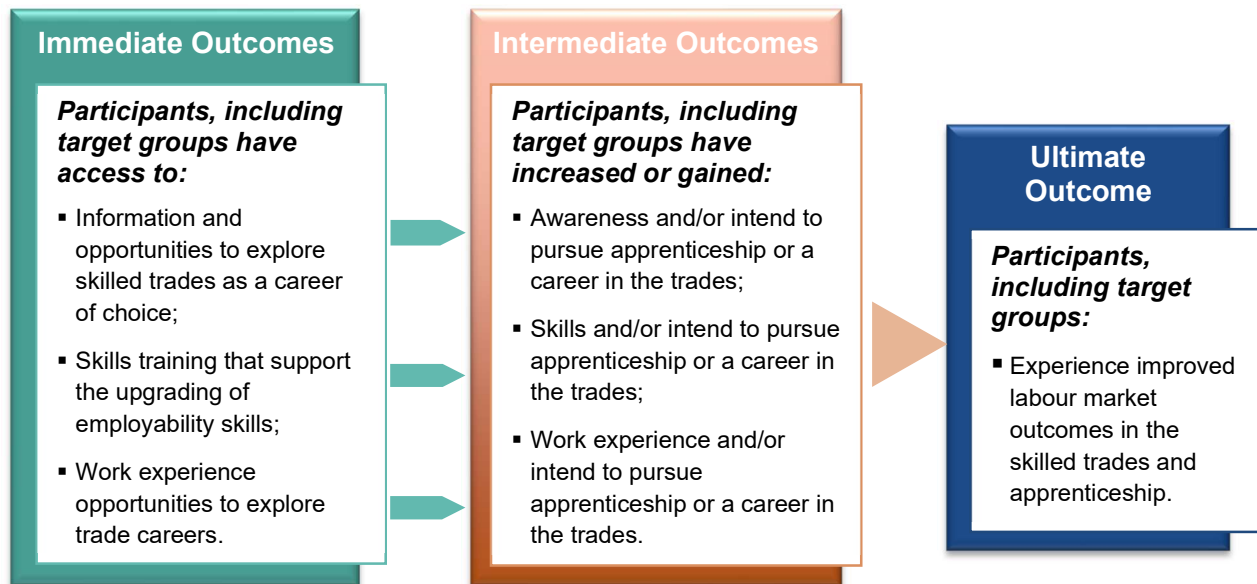
## 2.2 Program objectives and outcomes

The objectives of the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program are to:



1. Build awareness of the trades as viable, good quality careers;
2. Help equip individuals with the skills and supports they need to pursue a career in the skilled trades; and,
3. Provide opportunities to explore trades.

The Program's logic model<sup>16</sup> lists its expected outcomes, as follows:



**Source:** Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program document and project files – Logic Model

A variety of organizations are eligible to receive funding through the Program. They include:

- Community and not-for-profit organizations
- Indigenous organizations
- Employers
- Municipal, provincial, and territorial governments
- Colleges and training providers
- For-profit organizations: If the nature and intent of the activity is non-commercial, not intended to generate profit, and supports program priorities and objectives.

<sup>16</sup> See Appendix C for more information on the Program's logic model.

### 3 Evaluation Approach

This formative evaluation assesses the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program design, delivery, and early results. The evaluation covers the 13 projects that received funding during the fiscal years from 2018-2019 to 2021-2022. Of these 13 projects: eight (8) are still ongoing, and five (5) have accomplished what they set out to do and are now closed.

From 2018-2019 to 2022-2023, the Program funded a total of 22 projects. However, nine (9) projects were not included in the scope of this evaluation because:

- A project proposal (Apprenticeship Manitoba) was approved in 2020-2021, but the funding allocation was delayed.
- A call for proposals was issued in May 2021 to solicit new project proposals. As a result, eight (8) projects were recommended for approval; but the timing of the allocation of funds and the implementation of those projects prevented them from being included in the scope of the current evaluation.

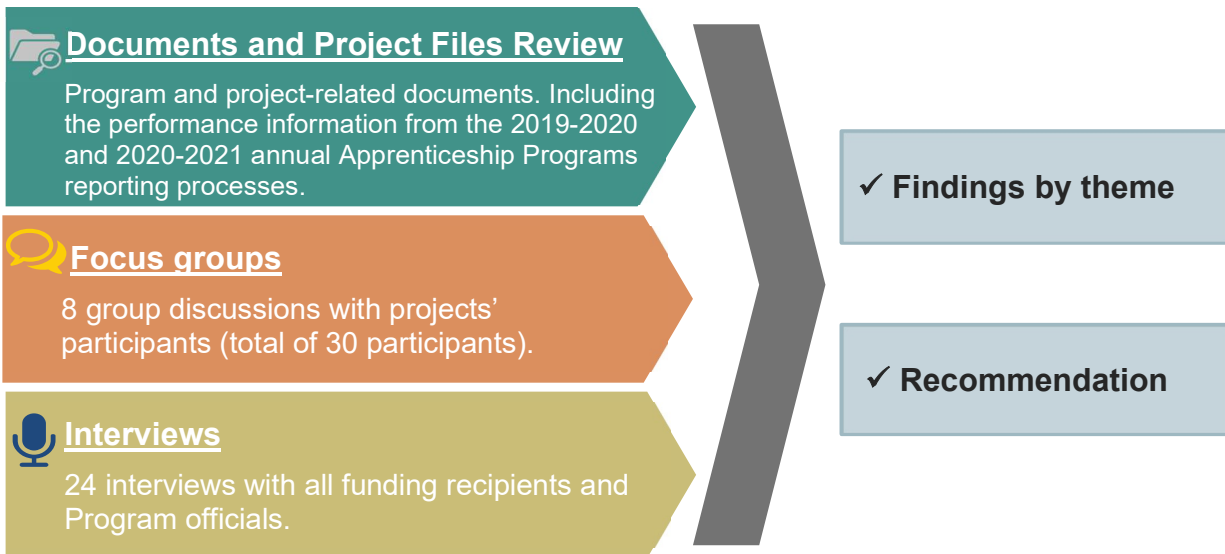
As shown in Table 1 below, for the purposes of the evaluation, evaluation questions were grouped in two (2) themes:

**Table 1: Evaluation Themes**

Theme 1: Program Implementation	Theme 2: Achievement of Program Outcomes	
Has the Program been implemented as planned?	<p><b>Awareness</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have participants, including target groups, had access to information and opportunities to explore the skilled trades as a career of choice?</li> <li>• Has the Program increased awareness of the skilled trades as a career choice for participants, including target groups?</li> </ul>	Have the Program's participants, including target groups, intended to pursue apprenticeship or a career in the trades?
	<p><b>Skills Training</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have participants, including target groups, had access to skills training that supports the upgrading of employability skills?</li> <li>• Has the Program helped equip the participants, including target groups, with the skills and support they need to pursue a career in the skilled trades?</li> </ul>	
	<p><b>Work Experience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have participants, including target groups, had access to work experience opportunities to explore trade careers?</li> <li>• Has the Program helped the participants, including target groups, gain work experience to explore the trades?</li> </ul>	

This evaluation used a multiple-lines-of-evidence approach.

**Figure 2: Lines of Evidence - Evaluation of the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program**



### Data limitations and mitigation strategies

Despite efforts to set up an appropriate performance measurement framework and gather data from project reports and the Annual Report on Apprenticeship Program process, the Program performance information was not comprehensive. As a result, the ability to report on the full range of outcomes was limited.

- The project files, especially quarterly activity and quarterly data reports were not all up to date at the time of the review. In addition, the requirement to produce and submit quarterly data reports was replaced with an annual reporting process as of October 2020.
- The performance data were available for two fiscal years (2019-2020 and 2020-2021):
  - Not all active funding recipients provided data through the annual reporting process (accuracy and coherence);
  - The total number of individuals reached by the Program remains unknown since one individual could participate in more than one type of activity (awareness, training, or work experience) and the total number of participants was collected by type of activity and during fiscal year 2019-2020 only. Consequently, it was not possible to present the total number of participants in all activities combined without overestimating the total participation (accuracy and coherence);
  - The Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program questionnaire<sup>17</sup> does not collect information on all of the Program's expected outcomes, unlike to the former data reports. For example, the questionnaire does include specific

<sup>17</sup> The annual Apprenticeship Programs reporting process is conducted to gather annual data for the Union Training and Innovation Program, the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program, and the Women in Construction Fund. Funding recipients complete a questionnaire designed for their program. This evaluation refers only to the questionnaire for the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program (the questionnaire).

## Evaluation of the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program

questions that would seek to inform the change in an individual's awareness of the skilled trades as a career choice before and after their participation (relevance);

- There was no requirement for the Program to set targets for equity-deserving groups participation. This limited the capacity of the evaluation to report on the success of the Program in encouraging Canadians facing barriers to explore and prepare for careers in the skilled trades (relevance and accuracy);
- Data collected on equity-deserving groups is based on individuals who self-identified to their funding recipients, and if the funding recipient gathered the information. Consequently, socio-demographic information collected might underrepresent the actual scope of the Program (accuracy and coherence).
- No data were collected directly from **project participants**<sup>18</sup> (**end-users**) on the benefits of participation in project activities. Instead, data were gathered from the funded recipients, thereby reducing the ability to obtain information directly from the people affected.
- No data collection is planned over time to see whether the intentions of the participants (intermediate outcomes) have led to actual changes (ultimate outcome). See Appendix D for a detailed description of Program outcomes.

Despite and because of the above-mentioned limitations, the 2019-2020 Annual Report on Apprenticeship Programs and associated data, and the 2020-2021<sup>19</sup> annual data on Apprenticeship Programs were used as the sole source of information to examine participation in funded projects.

In addition, the conduct of interviews with all 13 funding recipients and focus group discussions with 30 project participants further inform the achievement of Program outcomes. This evidence was supported by the documents and project files consulted.

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<sup>18</sup> The Department does not have the authority to collect data directly from participants. Data should be collected by funding recipients, who provide aggregated data to the Department through the annual report mechanism.

<sup>19</sup> The 2020-2021 Annual Report on Apprenticeship Programs was not available for this evaluation. However, raw data was provided.



## 4 Evaluation Findings

### 4.1 Program implementation

#### Key messages:

1. Activities in the funded projects included awareness, skills training, and work experience to strengthen pre-apprenticeship programs.
2. Funding recipients were satisfied with the funding allocation process and monitoring of the project's implementation.
3. Incomplete information was collected over time to track performance measurement.

Budget 2018 provided \$46M over five years including an ongoing \$10M per year to support innovation, collaboration, and opportunities in pre-apprenticeship training. This funding is also intended to help Canadians to find out about careers in trades, gain work experience, make informed career choices, and develop the skills needed to find and keep good, well-paying jobs in skilled trades.

The Program invested **\$36M** in expenditures and contributions from 2018-2019 to 2021-2022. Table 2 provides a breakdown of the funding allocation by fiscal year.

**Table 2: Breakdown of Funding Allocation by Fiscal Year**

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	TOTAL <sup>20</sup>
<b>Operating Expenditures</b>	\$ 882,906	\$714,384	\$1,214,853	\$ 747,227	\$ 3,559,370
<b>Contributions</b>	\$ 5,117,094	\$ 9,285,616	\$ 8,785,147	\$ 9,252,773	\$ 32,440,630
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 6,000,000</b>	<b>\$ 10,000,000</b>	<b>\$ 10,000,000</b>	<b>\$ 10,000,000</b>	<b>\$ 36,000,000</b>

**Source:** ESDC - Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program document and project files review Report

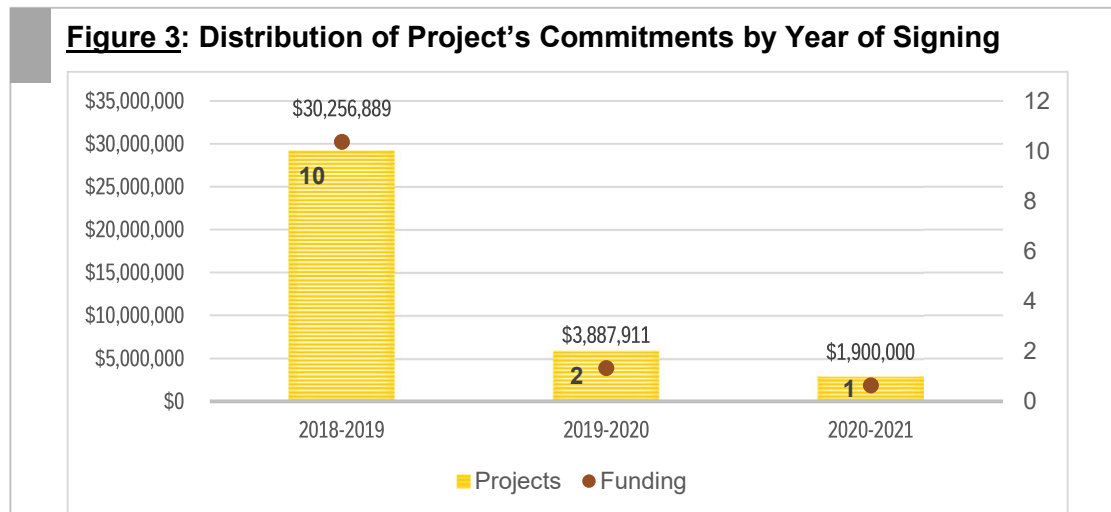
Over the four-year period from 2018-2019 to 2021-2022, approximately **\$36.1M** in funding was provided for a total of 13 projects.

- The reviewed documents showed that the Program met its initial commitment to sign 10 project agreements in 2018-2019, for a total of about **\$30M**. Therefore, the majority (65%) of the available budget was allocated under multi-year funding agreements.
- The unspent allocated budget in 2018-2019 was refiled in new agreements in each of the subsequent years. Interviewed Program officials said that since 2018-2019, the funds have been monitored annually to ensure that a judicious selection of projects are funded.

<sup>20</sup> For 2022-2023 and subsequent years, the funding request is for \$742,614 in expenditures and \$9,252,773 in Contributions, for a total of \$10,000,000.



Figure 3 shows that 10 projects agreements were signed in fiscal year 2018-2019 for a total multi-year funding commitments of \$30.3M. In fiscal year 2019-2020, two (2) projects were signed (a total of funding commitment of \$3.9M), and in 2020-2021, there was one signed project for a total of \$1.9M. These 13 projects were selected through targeted solicitation processes and the funding commitments resulted in expenditures spread over time.

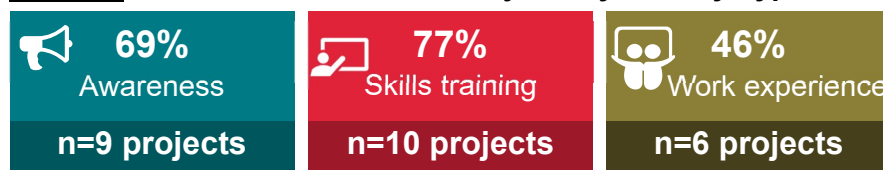



Source: ESDC - Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program document and project files review Report

### Activities in the funded projects included awareness activities, skills training, and work experience opportunities to strengthen pre-apprenticeship training across Canada


Overall, the Program funded projects delivered 3 main categories of pre-apprenticeship activities. Out of the 13 projects, 9 delivered more than one type of activity. As shown in Figure 4, out of the 13 projects, 6 projects (46% of projects) provided participants with work experience.

**Figure 4: Breakdown of Funded Projects by Activity Type**



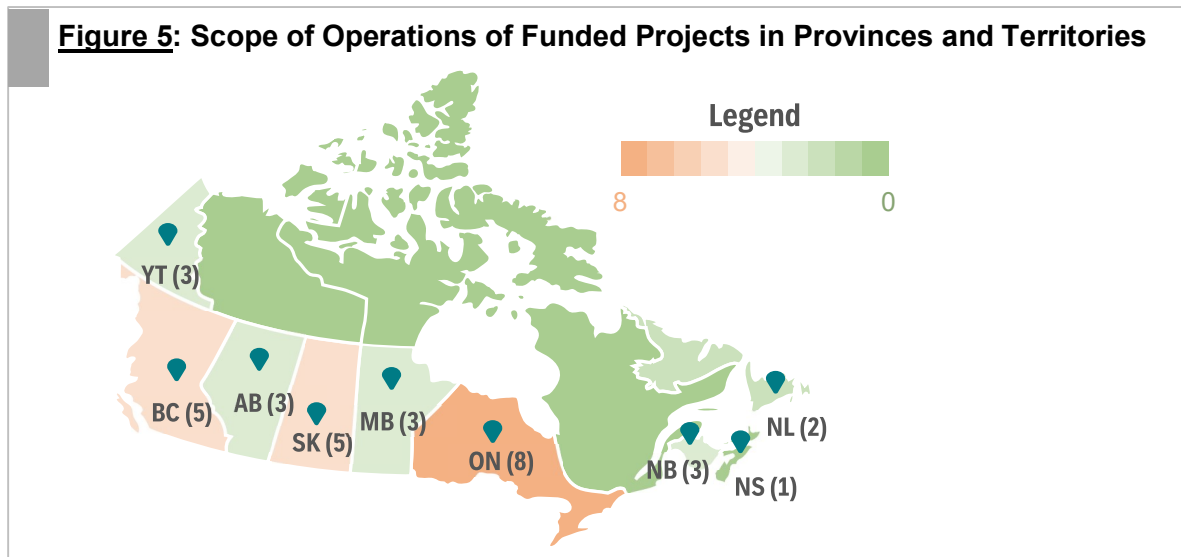


Funded projects covered a variety of skilled trades:  
 Welder, agriculture equipment technician, carpenter, heavy equipment operator, horticultural technician, electrician, construction craft worker, parts technician, metal fabricator, and auto body and collision technician.



The **regional distribution** of funded projects (a total of 13) demonstrates the Program's commitment to work with provinces, territories, and post-secondary institutions to develop or expand existing pre-apprenticeship programs offered at varying levels across Canada.

The evidence highlighted that most funding recipients operated their projects in two or more provinces or territories to increase and strengthen the Program's coverage across Canada. As shown in Figure 5 below, funded projects operated in Yukon, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Manitoba, British Columbia, and Alberta.



**Source:** ESDC - Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program document and project files review Report

There were no funded projects based out of Prince-Edward Island, the province of Quebec, the Northwest Territories and Nunavut over the timeframe covered by this evaluation. Due to the small funding envelope of this program (\$10M per year), a combination of unsolicited and solicited intake mechanisms was used to fund projects. It is important to note that not all organizations invited to apply submit a proposal.

### Funding recipients were satisfied with the funding allocation process and Program management

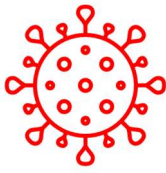
Almost all interviewed funding recipients expressed satisfaction with the appropriateness and timeliness of the funding they received.

“It has made an impact on people’s lives and on our province. That impact would not be possible without the funding from the Program. We would still do that training, but not be able to provide the funding for the tuition”. – **a funding recipient**

In addition, funding recipients reported that the Program funding allowed them to:

- enhance and scale up their activities
- provide hands-on workshops
- develop and facilitate new programs

### Funding recipients also reported their satisfaction with Program management, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic



Funding recipients said in the interviews that their **project costs increased** during the pandemic because of additional staffing hours, required capacity limits, and supply chain issues.

But they also said that Program officials provided them with support by helping and making it easier for them to adjust their project schedules and budgets.

### Incomplete information was collected over time to track performance measurement

When the Program was introduced in 2018-2019, funding recipients were required to collect data and submit:

- quarterly activity reports with information on progress made in activities, finances, results, and participants' success stories;
- quarterly data reports containing quantitative information gathered in exit interviews and post-activity surveys reporting on participation in activities and associated benefits.

In October 2020, the Program Operations Branch and the Skills and Employment Branch of the federal Department of Employment and Social Development agreed to replace quarterly data reports<sup>21</sup> with annual data gathering to compile information on the Apprenticeship Program using the specific questionnaire for the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program.<sup>22</sup>

Although this annual reporting process has helped streamline the Program's data collection while reducing the number of reporting requests,<sup>23</sup> the data collected is not sufficient for informing and tracking project performance. For example, not all funding recipients completed the annual questionnaire in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.

The questionnaire used for this annual reporting process gathers data related to whether participants became interested in continuing with an apprenticeship program and eventually going into a trade. However, the effects of the funded activities for participants, such as the increase of their awareness of the skilled trades and their skills level is not covered by this reporting instrument.

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<sup>21</sup> Quarterly activity reports must still be submitted by funding recipients along with their claim package.

<sup>22</sup> The Program Operations Branch liaises with funding recipients to ensure that they complete the data collection tool. The data received are analyzed by the Skills and Employment Branch in order to draft an aggregated report.

<sup>23</sup> This annual report has helped reduce the number of times a recipient is contacted from 9 to 4 or 5 times per year.

Interviewed funding recipients said that the annual reporting process was seamless and easy to follow. However, feedback from Program officials corroborated concerns about the process identified in this evaluation:

- Under-estimated socio-demographic data (equity-deserving groups) because funding recipients were unaware of the need to collect such information;
- The 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 annual performance information that was collected did not report sufficiently on the Program's overall reach:
  - Because most of the funding recipients provided more than one type of activity to the same participants, the total number of participants in each type of activity does not represent the actual number of individuals reached by the Program;
  - To avoid overestimating the reach of the Program, it is important to distinguish between the number of individuals affected by a funding recipient and the number of individual participants in each type of activity.
- Frequent follow-up with funding recipients by Program officials is often required to increase response rates, request missing data and validate the collected data.

## 4.2 Achievement of Program outcomes: access and benefits

According to the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program annual data,<sup>24</sup> **12,701 participants** were involved in the funded **awareness** activities. In addition, **3,072 and 488 participants**, respectively, took part in the funded **training** and **work experience** activities in fiscal years 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.

**Table 3: Number of Participants in Funded Activities**

Number of participants in activities	Awareness		Training		Work Experience	
	2019-2020	2020-2021	2019-2020	2020-2021	2019-2020	2020-2021
	1,754	10,947	1,108	1,964	194	294

Source: ESDC – 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 annual Program data

The total number of people reached by the Program remains unknown since an individual can participate in more than one activity.<sup>25</sup> This information is not comprehensive because only 75% (n=9 out of 12) and 90% (n=9 out of 10) of active funding recipients, respectively, completed the questionnaire in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.

The reviewed documents and annual Program data indicated that 86% (9,367 out of 10,947) of participants were individuals who only took part in awareness activities delivered by a single funded project in 2020-2021, and they did not participate in training and work experience activities.



<sup>24</sup> The exact percentage of new participants (newly enrolled) from one fiscal year to the next is unknown. The total number of participants for both 2 fiscal years and by activity should be interpreted with caution.

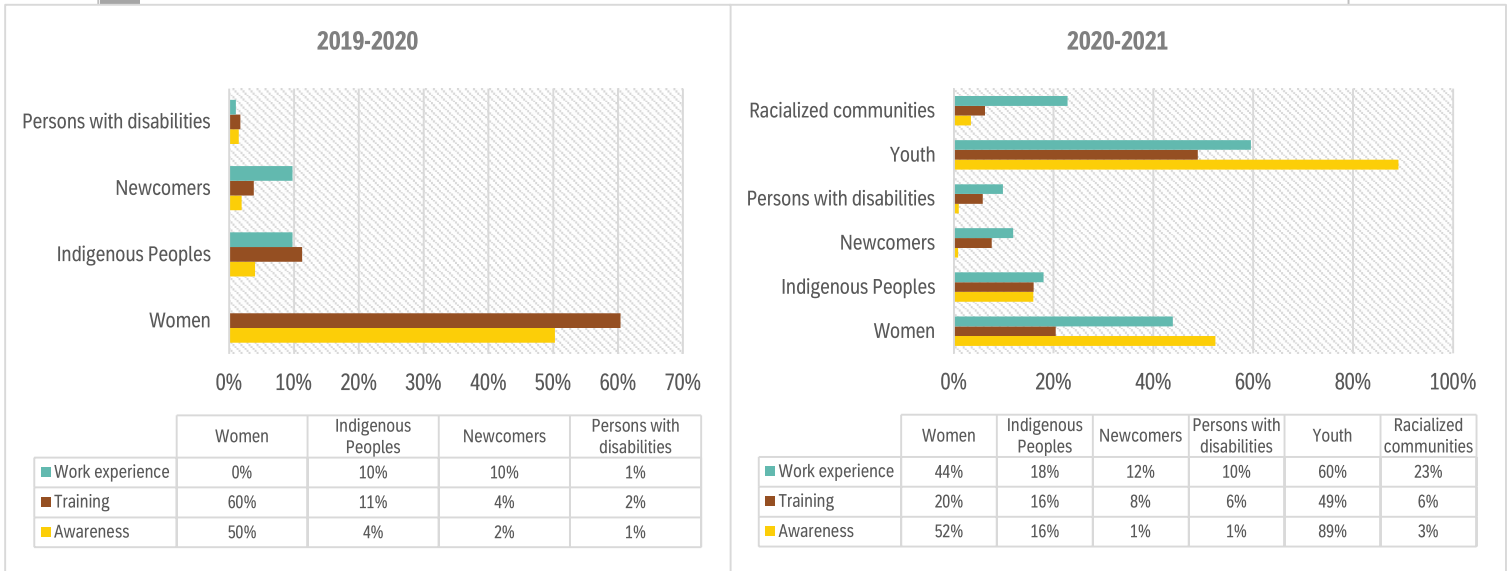
<sup>25</sup> In no case is the total number of participants for all activities combined presented.

## Evaluation of the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program

In addition, the annual data suggested that all participants in work experience activities would also have had access to awareness and skills training opportunities; providing these participants with a comprehensive pre-apprenticeship experience and increased their readiness for employment in a trade.

**Annual Program data also demonstrated that members of the intended equity-deserving groups participated in project activities, as shown in Figure 6 below.**

**Figure 6: Percentage\* of Equity-Deserving Group Participants in Funded Activities**



**Source:** ESDC – 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 annual Program data

- \*One funding recipient who reported a total of 9,367 participants (awareness) in 2020-2021 did not provide a distribution broken down by equity-deserving groups. The number of women (work experience), youth and racialized communities for 2019-2020 are missing.
- There were no baseline or targets for the participation of members of equity-deserving groups in awareness activities, as well as training and work experience.



## 4.2.1 Access to and benefits of awareness activities

### Key messages:

- A total of 12,701 participants had access to career exploration activities from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021. The Program exceeded its target (Figure 7).
- A majority of participants consulted in project activities said they had the information they needed to go into and be successful in a trade.
- Awareness activities helped to change participants' perceptions of skilled trades, a benefit they would not have had without the Program.

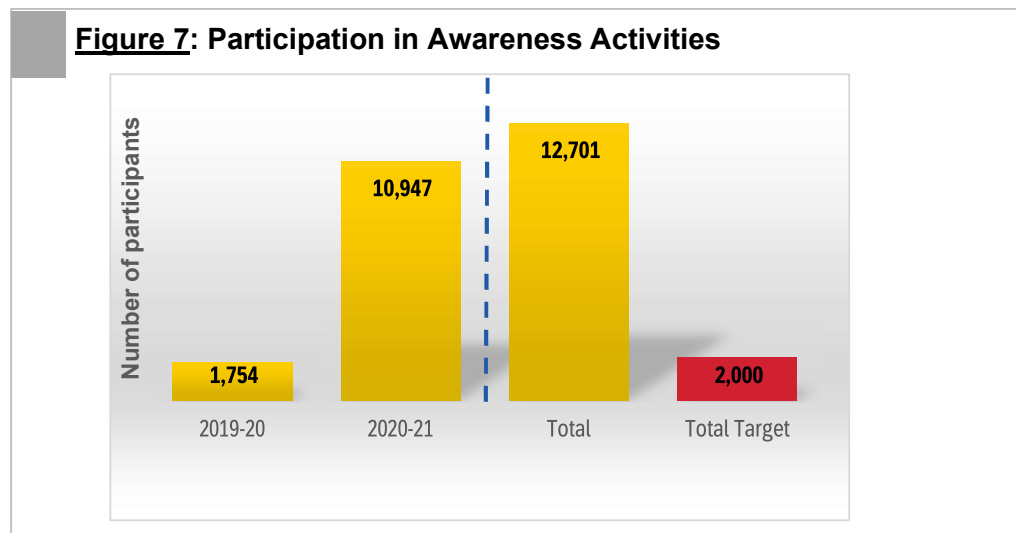
### Access to awareness activities

The Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program funded nine (9) projects that provided awareness activities, including the following:



- Introductory classes and exploratory workshops
- Summer trade-based camps
- Presentations to students
- Communication and marketing campaigns

Figure 7 below shows that the Program exceeded its target of reaching 2,000 participants in career exploration (awareness) activities for this two-year period.<sup>26</sup>



Source: ESDC –2019-2020 and 2020-2021 annual Program data

Of the nine (9) projects providing awareness activities, seven (7) projects also provided either training or work experience activities. Out of the total of 12,701 participants, 10,034 were from one single project whose activities included career discovery events in numerous cities and hands-on workshops.

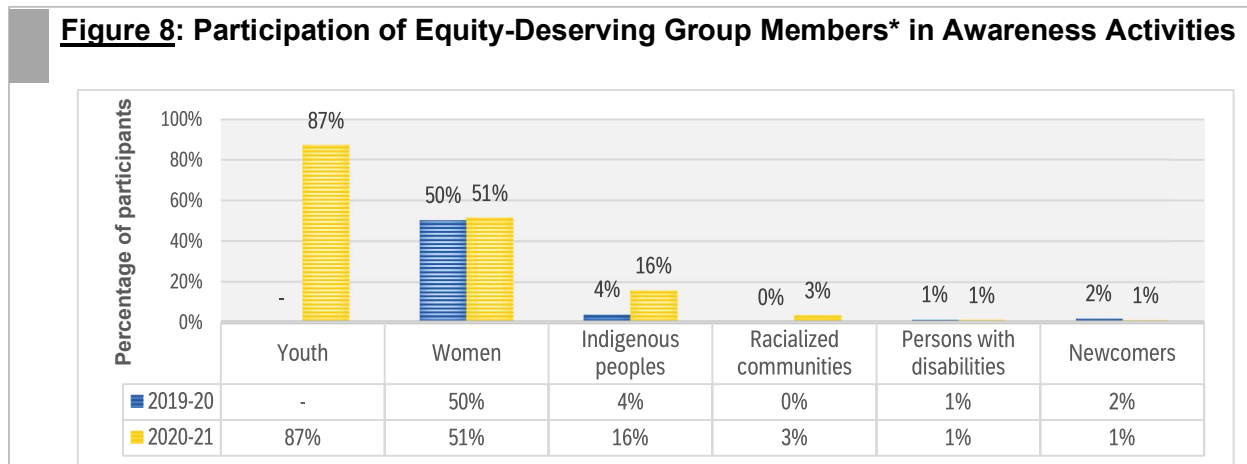
<sup>26</sup> The Program's target (2,000) was determined based on the number of participants targeted by funding recipients in September 2021.



## Evaluation of the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program

The Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program annual data (Figure 8) also showed that members of targeted equity-deserving groups, especially women, youth, and Indigenous peoples, had access to information about trades because of the Program.

It is important to note that many participants were members of one or more groups and that one funding recipient who reported 9,367 participants in 2020-2021 (out of 10,947 in 2020-2021) did not provide a breakdown of its data by equity-deserving groups. The total number of participants in awareness activities was 1,754 in 2019-2020 and 1,580 in 2020-2021.



**Source:** ESDC –2019-2020 and 2020-2021 annual Program data

- \*A participant can self-identify as a member of more than one equity-deserving groups. Consequently, the total number of participants from equity-deserving groups differs from the total number of Program participants in awareness activities.
- Data for youth and racialized communities were not gathered in 2019-2020.

### *Benefits of participation in awareness activities*

#### **Participants in awareness activities reported increased knowledge of skilled trades as a result of their participation**

**According to the focus groups held with project participants, the majority (64%) of them said that they had more knowledge relative to going into and being successful in a trade.** They also commented that they received information in a timely manner about the industry, workflow in the workplace and equipment required to work in a trade, after they participated in activities.



The majority of interviewed funding recipients also said that participants obtained more information about trades through their activities than they would have otherwise.

For example, one funding recipient noted that “Based on the conversations we’ve had with many students it seems like most schools are not necessarily promoting the trades as they should alongside the usual college and university pathways. So, there would be no way for students to even learn about the skilled trades had they not been in this program.” – **interviewed funding recipient**

In addition to increased knowledge of the workplaces where trades are practised and the equipment required, focus group participants pointed out that the activities in which they participated had provided them with specific information about Red Seal certification and the role of unions, detailed requirements for getting high-paying jobs in trades, and various pathways to getting employment in a skilled trade.



The majority of focus group participants (**71%**) pointed out that the workshops were helpful in setting them up for success in a trade. One fifth of participants (**22%**) identified as women commented that the introductory classes provided them with opportunities to explore skilled trades and make an informed decision about their career.

### **Funded awareness activities helped change participants' perceptions of skilled trades, a benefit they would not have had without the Program**

Projects file reviews and focus groups findings indicated that project participants changed their perceptions of skilled trades and were now acknowledging that going into a trade was also profitable career option, such as in the field of engineering.

For example, a participant identified as a newcomer, reported having agreed that occupations in trades were not low-level occupations and were suitable for everyone, regardless of socio-demographic characteristics, education, or experience.



"It was really an eye-opening opportunity to be able to be like yes, this is an option. You don't just have to go and be a teacher, be a doctor, be a lawyer. I feel like that's been the most important piece of information."

**– focus group participant**

Among focus groups participants, 36% were women. Although all of them reported having previously experienced discrimination<sup>27</sup> and discouragement in regard to working in a trade, they said that they felt encouraged and motivated to go into a trade because of their participation in funded activities.



These activities provided them with access to female instructors and they saw other women working in a trade. These participants pointed out in the end that the awareness activities had given them confidence about going into a trade and had also helped change their perceptions of jobs in a trade considered as male jobs.

As pointed out by a focus group participant, "I'm definitely more confident in my ability to be able to do the trades because I never had that option before going to these camps. I didn't know enough about it to be able to really say, this is an option." **– focus group participant**

One quarter of funding recipients who participated in the annual Apprenticeship Programs reporting process commented that recruiting newcomers for their activities had been challenging because of language barriers. These recipients collaborated with organizations, such as

<sup>27</sup> Mostly when they were in school.



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newcomer support organizations, to make it easier for most newcomer participants to obtain language proficiency certification that they would otherwise have been unable to afford.

Consequently, the majority of focus groups participants who self-identified themselves as newcomers and members of racialized communities (70%) said that the funded activities helped them to deal with barriers preventing them from entering the workforce employed in trades. These barriers included language obstacles, and lack of knowledge of Canadian culture.

### 4.2.2 Access to and benefits of skills training activities

#### Key messages:

- 3,072 participants had access to skills training activities from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021. The Program exceeded its target (Figure 9).
- Training activities helped to increasing participants' skills and make them more employable.
- Participants in funded training activities, particularly members of equity-deserving groups, acquired skills to make a career working in a trade.

#### Access to skills training activities

Skills training activities provided as part of the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program focused on:

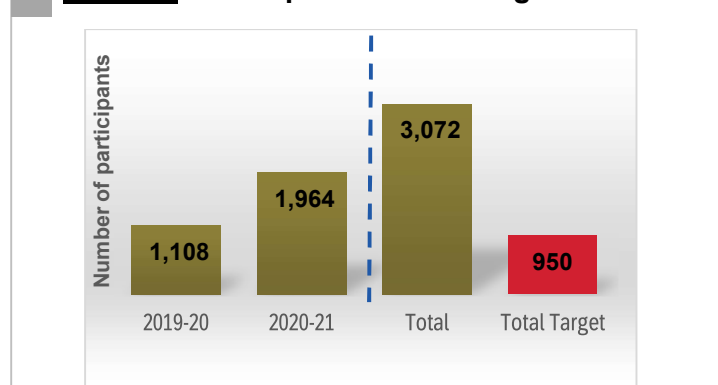


- academic skills such as reading, writing, numeracy, oral communication skills and, computer literacy;
- industry-oriented training, such as working with tools and training facilitated by industry representatives;
- work and life skills training, including working with unions, managing emotions, and finances.

Based on the annual Program reports, a total 3,072 participants had access to skills training activities in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021. The data suggested that nearly half of these participants also took part in awareness and/or work experience activities.

As shown in Figure 9, the Program exceeded its target of 950 participants<sup>28</sup> in training activities for this two-year period.

**Figure 9: Participation in Training Activities**



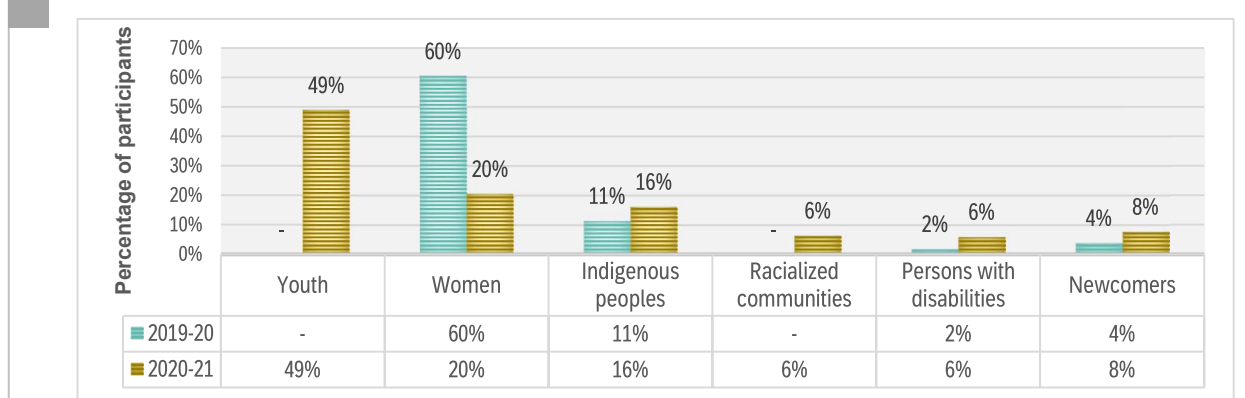
Source: ESDC – 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 annual Program data

<sup>28</sup> The Program target (950) was determined based on the number of participants targeted by funding recipients in September 2021.

Training activities were organized in three phases, ranging from three weeks to six months: in-class theory instruction, practical learning in workshops, and work placements.

According to data collected from funding recipients through the annual reporting process, members of equity-deserving groups had access to training activities, especially women, youth, and Indigenous peoples.

**Figure 10: Participation of Equity-Deserving Group Members\* in Skills Training**



**Source:** ESDC – 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 annual Program data

- \*A participant can self-identify as a member of more than one equity-deserving groups. Therefore, the total number of participants from equity-deserving groups differs from total Program participants in training activities.
- Data for youth and racialized communities were not collected in 2019-2020.

The reviewed documents also corroborated that members of equity-deserving groups participated in large numbers in the skills training activities.



For example, 810 students were enrolled in the Creating Opportunities for Entry into Trades Program, from December 2018 to March 2022, held by Saskatchewan Polytechnic. Of these students, 250 completed their training.

The equity-deserving groups were: Indigenous peoples (32%), women (26%), newcomers (15%), persons with disabilities (14%), and youth (13%).

### ***Benefits of participation in skills training activities***

#### **Interviewed funding recipients and focus group participants agreed that the training activities help to improve trade-related skills and increase employability**

Many funding recipients reported successfully working with employers to provide industry-oriented training in order to better prepare participants. Some employers representing their respective sectors facilitated training sessions, which led to direct hires and apprenticeship placements.

In particular, an interviewed funding recipient reported that, “It’s worked well having employers involved and meeting the talent but also being involved in explaining those next steps firsthand. In many cases we’ve had employers wanting to hire people or labour unions saying they want this person to go into apprenticeship training, so they give us an application.” – interviewed funding recipient

**All focus groups participants involved in training activities (13 out of 30 participants) consistently reported an increase in their trade-related skills as a result of their participation.** In addition, the majority of focus group participants (64%) who took the skills training pointed out that the work placements that followed their training helped them improve their skills in their respective trade-related occupations such as welder, electrician, construction craft worker, and horticultural technician.

For example, a focus group participant said that there has been a “Very big difference. Without participating in that training, it's just a little bit harder to get a job and I experienced that. Now, I will get a response to my job application a lot sooner than I would have without this training.” – **focus group participant**

In addition, participants in focus groups on training commented that they received additional supports from funding recipients to help them succeed in their pre-apprenticeship activities and secure gainful employment:

- Some of them (40%) pointed out that trainers had helped them in their job searches by giving them instructions on résumé writing, differentiating between jobs with or without unions, and interpreting a skilled trade job advertisement.
- The majority of these focus group participants (64%) were provided with basic trade-related equipment and financial assistance, which was highlighted as a key factor in decision to register and complete the training. Otherwise, the training would not have been affordable, and they would not have considered working in a trade as a viable career option.



- The 2018 ePanel Update<sup>29</sup> also demonstrated that trade-related equipment is an obstacle to getting employment in a trade, and the financial assistance provided for participants is essential in helping them get started in their career. In fact, 68% of the 2018 ePanel Update respondents reported that employers expected them to own their trade-specific tools when they started their apprenticeships.
  - Among those expected to own tools, 47% spent less than \$1,000; 30% spent \$1,001 to \$2,500; and 8% spent more than \$5,000.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic caused temporary shutdowns<sup>30</sup> to the majority (75%) of projects. However, project files and interviews revealed that some funding recipients improved their practices in order to fulfill their commitments and achieve project outcomes. They mostly introduced online or blended learning settings, and limited participant numbers to comply with social distancing measures.



<sup>29</sup> The 2018 Apprentices in Canada ePanel is an online survey conducted by the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum/ Forum canadien sur l'apprentissage (CAF-FCA). The 2018 ePanel Update provides insights from pre-apprenticeship participants (n=309), apprentices (n=1,580) and early career journeypersons (n=168) on topics such as getting a job in a trade, wages, on-the-job training, employment, barriers and completion of training.

<sup>30</sup> Lockdowns in various provinces, reduced shop availability, reduced ability to deliver hands-on lessons, lack of instructors available

## Participants in funded training activities, particularly members of equity-deserving groups, acquired skills to help them pursue a career in a trade.

The majority of funding recipients acknowledged that participants from equity-deserving groups had access to employment opportunities previously unavailable to them.

Through partnerships with employers and community-based organizations, opportunities for employment in industry were created for Indigenous peoples, women, and newcomers to be hired in the industry.



Half (55% of N=9 participants) of focus group participants who self-identified as members of racialized communities and newcomers pointed out that their participation in skills training had helped them develop their skills. The training also helped newcomers improve their cultural skills to be able to effectively and confidently navigate Canadian workplace culture.

One focus group participant said that “There are a lot of benefits other than just obtaining the skills. I came from a line of work I wasn’t passionate about it. And then this opportunity arose, and I couldn’t be happier. It gave me the opportunity to change careers and better my life, my mental health.” – **focus group participant**

### 4.2.3 Access to and benefits of work experience opportunities

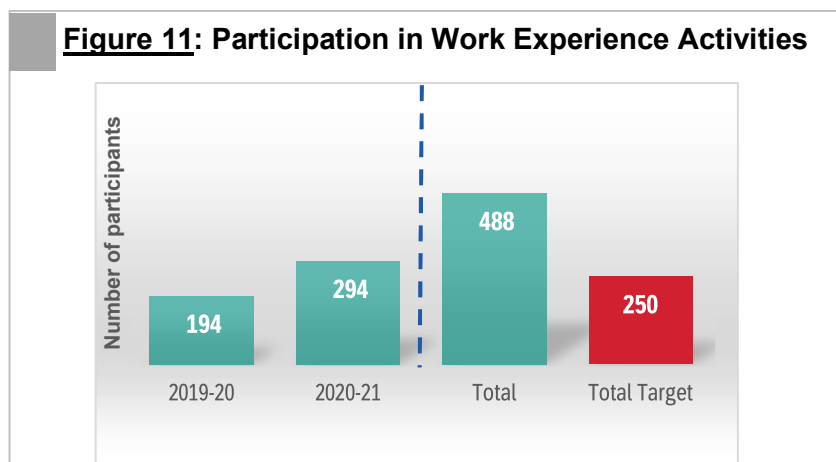
#### Key messages:

- 488 participants had access to work experience opportunities from 2019-2020 to 2020-2021. The Program exceeded its target (Figure 11).
- Participants in work experience activities increased their preparedness for a career in a skilled trade.

#### Access to work experience opportunities

Between 2019-2020 and 2020-2021, **488** participants attended work experience activities provided in six (6) funded projects.

The Program exceeded its target of having 250 participants in work experience activities during this two-year period<sup>31</sup>



Source: ESDC – the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 annual Program data

<sup>31</sup> The Program’s target (250) was determined based on the number of participants targeted by funding recipients in September 2021.

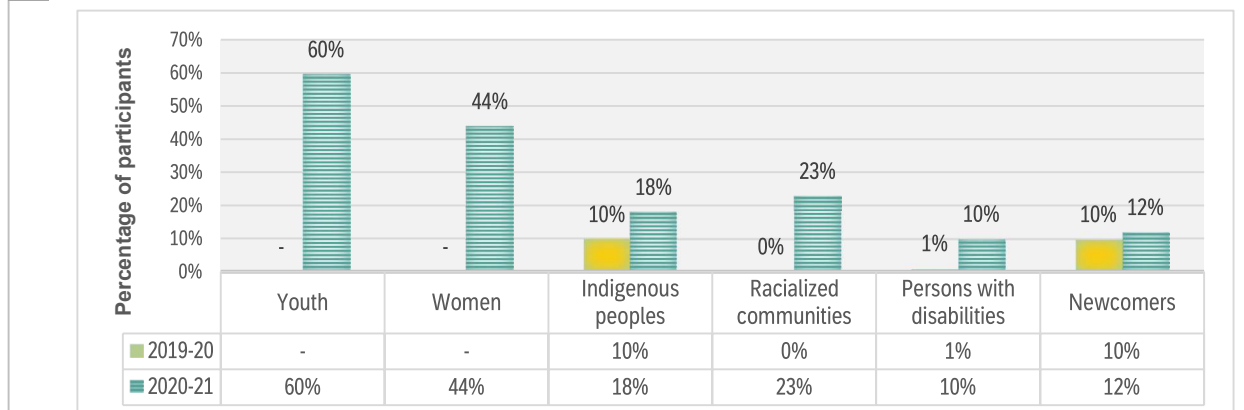
**Reviewed Program and project documents, and interviews with funding recipients revealed a lack of clarity in some descriptions of work experience activities.** As a result, there is a disparity between the activities actually provided in the projects providing work experience and the Program design: these activities range from a one-day job-shadowing to a paid internship.

Description of Work Experience Activities According to:		
Program Design	Reviewed documents and project files (contribution agreements for the six (6) funded projects that focus on work experience)	Interviews with funding recipients
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Paid work placements to increase awareness of trades</i></li> <li>• <i>Individuals who participate in a work experience component will complete the requirements to register as an apprentice</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitate paid work placement (only included in one agreement)</li> <li>• Providing employment connections, apprenticeship sponsorships and ongoing wraparound support to help individuals deal with barriers preventing them from obtaining long-term employment and completing apprenticeship training</li> <li>• Placement coach to assist in finding employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Placements or internships in trade-related companies</li> <li>• Another skills training activity</li> <li>• A one-day job shadowing activity</li> </ul>

Some funding recipients and project participants said that the work experience activities consisted of work placements or internships in trade-related companies with specializations in areas such as: construction, ship building and campus landscaping.

Annual Program data indicated that members of equity-deserving groups had access to work experience activities between 2019-2020 and 2020-2021.

**Figure 12: Participation of members of Equity-Deserving Groups\* in Work Experience Activities**



Source: ESDC – 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 annual Program data

- \* A participant can self-identify as a member of more than one equity-deserving groups. Therefore, the total number of participants from equity-deserving groups differs from total Program participants in work experience activities.
- The number of participants who self-identified as women and took part in work experience activities in 2019-2020 is invalid and can not be shown.



It should also be noted that data for youth and racialized communities were not gathered during the 2019-2020 annual Apprenticeship Programs reporting process.

### ***Benefits of work experience opportunities***

The documents consulted and feedback received from funding recipients and participants demonstrated that work experience activities helped increase awareness of trades, promoted skills training, and helped meet expectations to register as an apprentice.

All funding recipients whose projects included work experience activities reported that participants had increased their preparedness for a career in a skilled trade:

- They enhanced what they had learned by acquiring hands-on experience in a job in a trade;
- They were bridged to employment after making connections with employers in a trade and with unions and other tradespeople.



For example, the funded “Pathways to Shipbuilding for African Nova Scotians” project, implemented by the Irving Shipbuilding Centre of Excellence in Nova Scotia, provided a 15-week pre-apprenticeship welding course for 20 participants between March 2019 and June 2020. They were all subsequently employed in the welding industry after completing the work experience activities that followed the training.

While the majority of participants said that their work placement really prepared them for work in a skilled trade, a few of them also commented that they expected to be assigned meaningful duties and responsibilities during their assignments.

This was clearly illustrated when a focus group participant explained, “I worked for a nursery at their regular farm where they actually grow a lot of annuals, perennials, and shrubs for distribution. My work placement was very relatable. But I was just a general laborer and I felt like I could have taken on way more responsibility than what I had.” – **focus group participant**

#### **4.2.4 Intention to pursue an apprenticeship or a make a career in the trades**

##### **Key messages**

- Increased self-confidence and ability to make informed decisions about finding a job in a trade resulted from participation in projects.
- The majority of participants in awareness (2020-2021), training and work experience activities reported that they intended to register for an apprenticeship program.
- Participants in funded activities suggested that funding recipients should promote project activities more to achieve greater outreach.

Evidence from annual Program data, interviews with funding recipients and focus groups with participants pointed to the fact that all funded projects contributed to participants considering pursuing apprenticeship or a career in the trades.

### **Funding recipients and project participants commented on the impact of project activities.**

According to annual Program data:



**One third** of funding recipients said that their projects had increased apprenticeship continuation rates and secured employment for their participants.



**Almost a third** of them mentioned more employer engagement and partnerships: they recruited and trained new apprentices in a timely manner in the hands-on skills training.

Focus group participants reported:

- **Increased ability to make informed decisions:**

- More than half of focus groups participants said that participation in activities gave them more facts and information to consider about working in a trade, resulting in a more realistic perception.

For instance, a focus group participant said, “We have not received a lot of information on trades at school. Moreover, it is something that the school boards really need to work on and not only for women, but for all students. Participating in our project really helped us make the decision to pursue into this field.” – **focus group participant**

- **Better prepared to find a career:**

- Almost half of the focus groups participants reported that their participation in funded activities had resulted in better employment opportunities for them. These activities provided them with education, skills, knowledge, experience, and necessary references for finding a job in a trade.

- **Increased confidence:**

- One third of focus group participants said that the skills they learned, and their work experience prepared them to enter the workforce employed in trades.

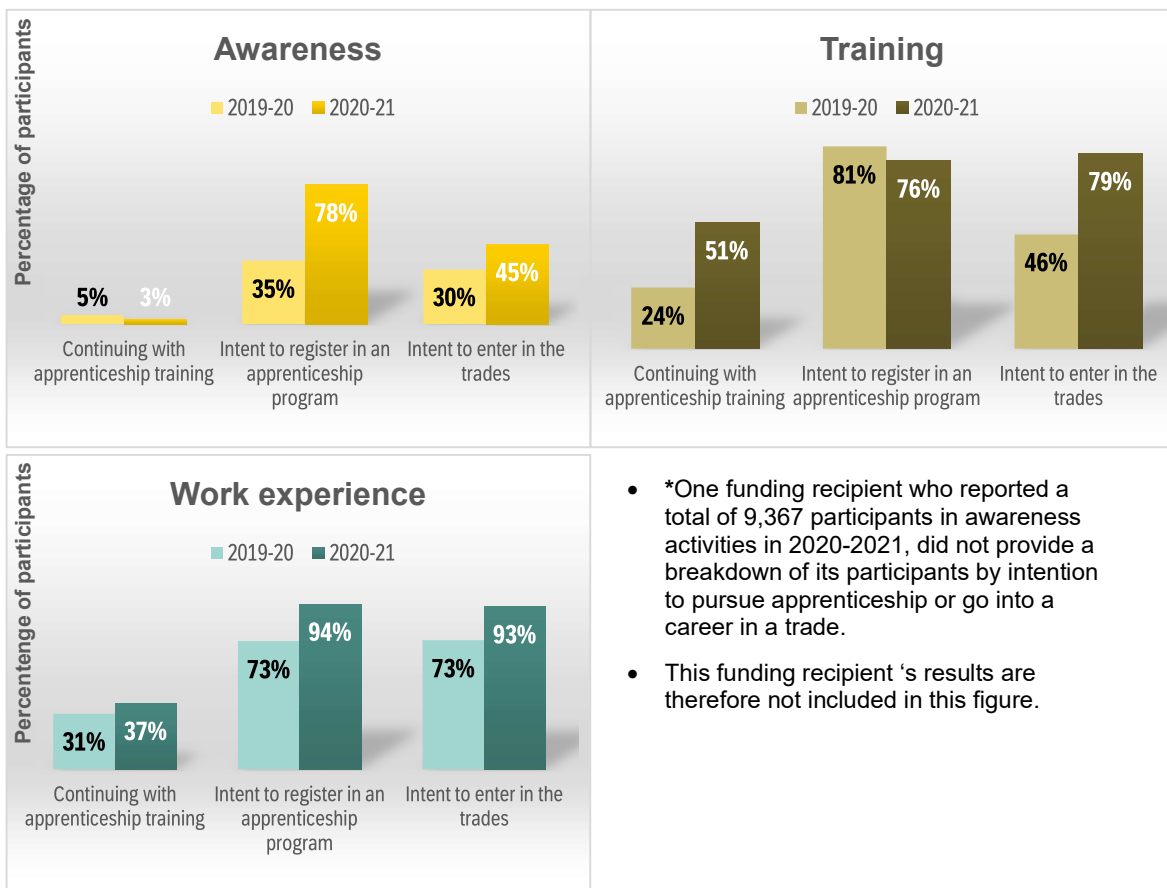
As one focus group participant said, “Before this training, I didn't even know the difference between the apprenticeship programs and the different tracks. Now, I feel confident to go to a construction site and show my skills.” – **focus group participant**

**Annual Program data indicated that project participants intended to register in an apprenticeship program.**

The Program targeted between **15% and 25%** of the total number of participants who *intended to continue with apprenticeship training and register in an apprenticeship program*; and that between **5% and 10%** of the total number of participants *intended to enter into a trade*.

According to the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 editions of the Annual Report on Apprenticeship Programs, the Program is meeting its expectations. Data collected through this annual reporting process specifically indicated that the majority of participants said they intended to continue in a trade or in an apprenticeship program as a result of their participation in the funded activities\*.

**Figure 13: Participants in Funded Activities Said They Intended to Continue in a Trade in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021**



- \*One funding recipient who reported a total of 9,367 participants in awareness activities in 2020-2021, did not provide a breakdown of its participants by intention to pursue apprenticeship or go into a career in a trade.
- This funding recipient 's results are therefore not included in this figure.

**Source:** ESDC – 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 annual Program data



Examples of projects that contributed to the achievement of Program outcomes	
Western Joint Electrical Training Society	Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ongoing project that provided awareness, training, and work experience activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completed project that focused on awareness and work experience activities</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As of March 2021, 93% of participants (n=116) had registered in an apprenticeship program.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Of the total number of graduates, 187 of graduates applied for an apprenticeship. The project exceeded its target by 21% (n=155)</li> </ul>

Feedback gathered from focus group participants about continuing with an apprenticeship is consistent with the annual Program data. The large majority of participants (80%) were enrolled in an apprenticeship program when the focus groups were held.



However, a few of them (10%) reported having difficulty finding a sponsor<sup>32</sup> for the rest of their training, which was not covered by the Program. Completion of this training is a prerequisite for continuing an apprenticeship.

The cost of training was also an issue, as reported by 35% of respondents in the 2018 Apprentices of Canada ePanel Updates who found it difficult to find an employer sponsor to cover the cost. This survey also reported that 79% of pre-apprentices were trying to pursue an apprenticeship at the time they completed the survey, but 64% could not find an employer sponsor to achieve this goal.

Data collected through the annual Apprenticeship Programs reporting process, interviews with funding recipients, and focus groups with participants provided evidence of equity-deserving group participants' experiences related to entering, navigating, and continuing in a trade.

Information on equity-deserving groups included in the Program's annual data is only available if participants have self-identified to funding recipients. Consequently, socio-demographic information collected by the Program may underrepresent the reach of the Program for these groups. This limitation impeded the ability to conduct an in-depth gender-based analysis+; however, interviews and focus groups helped to address this gap.

<sup>32</sup> An employer sponsor hire apprentices to train and develop them into tradesperson. The sponsor is also responsible for registering, evaluating and recommending the apprentice for certification.

**Funded recipients and project participants also commented about continuing to implement recruitment strategies to engage more people, as well as members of equity-deserving groups.**



Almost half of the funding recipients indicated in the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 annual Program data that they had had difficulty recruiting:

- Indigenous peoples: the need to offer activities close to their communities to avoid transportation and childcare issues;
- Women: lack of a role model, which has led to the trades being seen as an unsustainable career option;
- Persons with disabilities: accommodation, as many employers are unwilling or unable to make the necessary changes for those who may need them in the trades;
- Newcomers: language barriers, especially in relation to learning English.

Based on the strategies implemented to overcome their respective difficulties, all of them said that inclusive marketing plans and targeted advertising were some of their best practices:

- Inclusive marketing plans: collaboration with respective community organizations, unions, local support groups, and other partners to promote project activities;
- Targeted advertising: developing and using materials that featured specific groups. Also implies using targeted media to promote activities: brochures, flyers, posters, videos, and social media.



Nearly half of the focus group participants found out consistently about funded project activities from social media advertisements on Facebook and Instagram. In addition, more than one third of the participants heard about the activities from friends and family members who had taken similar training programs, as well as from high-school guidance counsellors.



All focus group participants were satisfied with their involvement in the funded project activities. Based on their experiences, they commented on the need to continue promoting funded activities, because the Program may be useful to others who do not see the current postings.

As commented in a focus group: "I really wouldn't have known that these activities were available. It wasn't really advertised in places that I generally frequent."

**- focus group participant**

## 5 Conclusion

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The formative evaluation of the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program consisted in assessing the design and delivery of the Program, as well as the results of the 13 projects funded between 2018-2019 and 2021-2022.

- ✓ Document and project files review, interviews with funding recipients and focus groups with participants provided evidence that the Program was implemented as planned.
- ✓ Although these lines of evidence also indicated that the Program has achieved its intended outcomes, the limitations identified in the Program performance data prevented the evaluation from specifically reporting in full on the actual extent of the preliminary results.
- ✓ Moreover, the fact that the Department did not collect data directly from participants in funded projects also limited the ability to fully report on the impact of funded projects.

- **The evaluation found that the Program was implemented as planned.** The budget announced in 2018 was effectively allocated to fund projects that provided access to career exploration activities, skills training and work experience activities in the trades.
- **Funding recipients were satisfied with the funding allocation process and monitoring of the implementation of projects.** Almost all funding recipients interviewed expressed satisfaction with the appropriateness and timeliness of the funding they received.
- **Incomplete information was collected over time to track performance measurement.** There is a need to adjust the data collection approach to more effectively collect comprehensive data for measuring the achievement of program outcomes.
- **The funded projects provided participants with opportunities to participate in activities related to skilled trades.**
  - These activities helped raise awareness of skilled trades as a career of choice, provided participants with the skills required by industry, and prepared them to enter workforce employed in trades.
  - The Program funded 13 projects. Most of them implemented more than one type of activity. Among these funded projects, 10 projects provided skills training, 9 projects provided awareness activities, and 6 projects focused on work experience.
  - According to the interviewed funding recipients and consulted participants, the majority of participants in these activities reported having the information, skills, the support and confidence to make a decision to make a career or to continue working in a trade. The majority of them said they intended to register in an apprenticeship program and go into a trade.

## 6 Recommendation

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The evaluation found that incomplete information had been collected in 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 to track the Program's performance in terms of its outreach and outcomes, such as increased awareness of skilled trades and increase of skills.

Despite efforts to set up an appropriate performance measurement framework and gather data from project reports and the Annual Report on Apprenticeship Program process, the Program performance information was not comprehensive (rationale and detailed information are provided in the section: *Data limitations and mitigation strategies*).

Therefore, the evaluation recommends that the Program performance measurement strategy ensure the collection and reporting of relevant,<sup>33</sup> accurate<sup>34</sup> and coherent<sup>35</sup> data and information, facilitated by the mandatory participation of funding recipients in the annual reporting process and data validation.

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<sup>33</sup> Relevant means useful for performance measurement, information which matter in the context.

<sup>34</sup> Accurate means information is representative of the targeted measurement, covering the required population and period of reference.

<sup>35</sup> Coherent means information is consistent over time, between region and across sub-populations.

## 7 Appendices

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## Appendix A: Overview of the Program – Outputs

### THE SKILLED TRADES AWARENESS AND READINESS PROGRAM – OUTPUTS



**Appendix B: Summary of Funded Projects by Fiscal Year**

ORGANIZATIONS	DESCRIPTION	PROVINCE/ TERRITORY	TYPES OF ACTIVITIES	EQUITY- DESERVING GROUPS TARGETED
<b>FISCAL YEAR 2018-2019</b>				
<b>Canadian Apprenticeship Forum*</b>	Evaluating Success in Pre-Apprenticeship  Identify successful practices, measurements and outcomes from various pre-apprenticeship programs through a national/regional level discussion with apprenticeship stakeholders.	National	Awareness (Research activities, Conferences, Consultations)	
<b>Canadian Welding Bureau Welding Foundation*</b>	30-Hour Pre-Employment Program and Women of Steel  Develop a 30-hour Pre-Employment Program for participants to explore the welding trade with hands-on experience. Expand a targeted social media outreach to women through the Women of Steel initiative.	National	Awareness (social media outreach, conferences)  Pre-apprenticeship training  Work experience	Women, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, underemployed individuals
<b>Skillplan and British Columbia Colleges</b>	Enhancing the Essential Skills Training System to Increase Pre-Apprenticeship and Apprenticeship Success  Develop and design a structured essential skills training system by enhancing existing and new pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programming to better support Red Seal success for both traditional and non-traditional learners (such as youth, older workers, low-skilled workers, women, new Canadians, racialized persons and Indigenous Peoples).	British Columbia	Awareness  Essential skills training	Youth, older workers, low-skilled workers, women, newcomers, racialized persons, and Indigenous peoples
<b>Western Joint Electrical Training Society</b>	Workplace Alternative Trades Training  Recruit, train and facilitate paid on-the-job experience with a focus on under-represented groups in the electrical sector.	British Columbia	Awareness  Essential skills and applied skills training  Work experience	Women, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, persons with disabilities and youth
<b>Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission (Agency of the Government of Saskatchewan)*</b>	Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship Program  Expand the Saskatchewan Youth Apprenticeship Program which gives high school students a chance to start building a portfolio to showcase their skills and experience while they are still in school. Aims to increase the proportion of under-represented participants, particularly female and Indigenous students in the program.	Saskatchewan	Awareness (social media outreach, conferences)  Work experience	Indigenous peoples and women

ORGANIZATIONS	DESCRIPTION	PROVINCE/ TERRITORY	TYPES OF ACTIVITIES	EQUITY- DESERVING GROUPS TARGETED
<b>Saskatchewan Polytechnic*</b>	<p>Creating Opportunities for Entry into Trades</p> <p>Provide under-represented groups the opportunity to access and gain experience through a new and innovative method, where a portion of their technical training will be provided through online materials for eight skilled trades.</p>	Saskatchewan	<p>Awareness</p> <p>Pre-apprenticeship training</p> <p>Work experience</p>	Indigenous peoples, newcomers, women, and persons with disabilities
<b>Conestoga College</b>	<p>Increasing Canada's Prosperity through Skilled Trades</p> <p>Deliver a 33-week full-time pre-apprenticeship program to help participants from key groups (women, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, persons with disabilities and youth) prepare for a successful welding career. The program will also assist in addressing the needs of industry and combating the shortage of skilled welders regionally and across Canada.</p>	Ontario	Essential skills and pre-apprenticeship training	Women, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, persons with disabilities and other under-represented groups
<b>Mohawk College and Marshall School of Skilled Trades &amp; Apprenticeship</b>	<p>Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Training</p> <p>Deliver pre-apprenticeship training from a mobile classroom to members of marginalized communities in Hamilton, Ontario. Aim to bridge the gap between these individuals and employers.</p>	Ontario	<p>Awareness</p> <p>Pre-apprenticeship training</p>	Women, Indigenous peoples, youth, newcomers, residents in priority neighborhoods, and residents of rural communities
<b>Irving Shipbuilding Centre of Excellence*</b>	<p>Pathways to Shipbuilding for African Nova Scotians</p> <p>Support African Nova Scotian students through a 15-week pre-apprenticeship Welding diploma program at the Nova Scotia Community College with possible employment outcomes at Irving Shipbuilding Inc.</p>	Nova Scotia	Essential skills and pre-apprenticeship training	Africans
<b>Humber College of Applied Arts and Technology</b>	<p>Level Up: Build a Career in the Skilled Trades</p> <p>Deliver pre-apprenticeship training in the Greater Toronto Area to underrepresented groups, such as incarcerated and low-income women, racialized youth and newcomers, through three different streams: Horticultural Technician for Low-Income Women, Horticultural Technician for Incarcerated Women and Electrician.</p>	Ontario	<p>Essential skills and pre-apprenticeship training</p> <p>Work experience</p>	Incarcerated and low-income women, racialized youth and newcomers



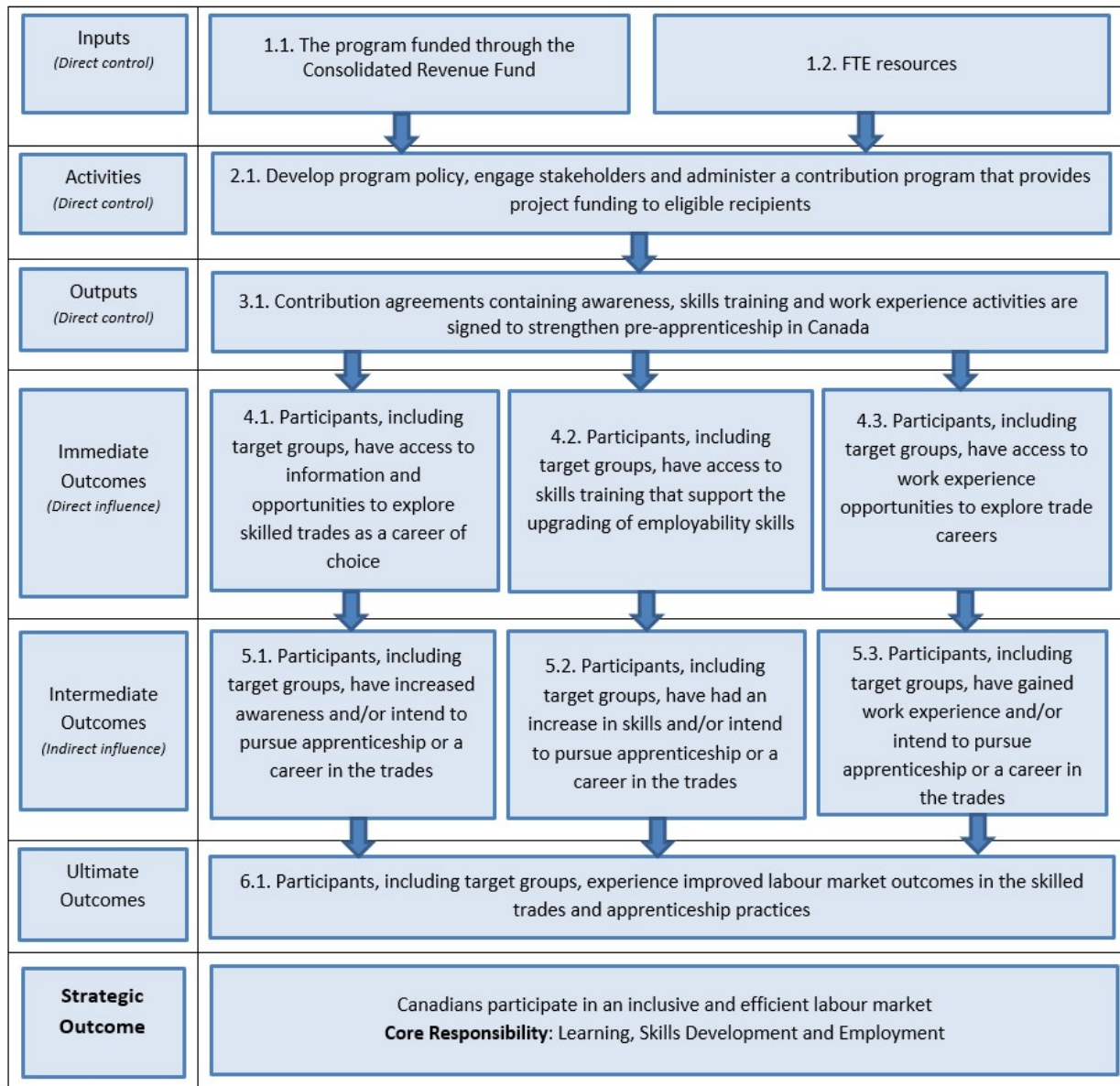
## Evaluation of the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program

ORGANIZATIONS	DESCRIPTION	PROVINCE/ TERRITORY	TYPES OF ACTIVITIES	EQUITY- DESERVING GROUPS TARGETED
<b>FISCAL YEAR 2019-2020</b>				
<b>Colleges and Institutes Canada</b>	<p>Pre-Apprenticeship Programming in Canadian Colleges and Institutes</p> <p>Identify pre-apprenticeship programs for the trades that lead to a certificate. Capture the best practices in these programs that will be made available to apprenticeship stakeholders throughout Canada. Develop a pilot program that will be conducted to gather further information regarding best practices and lessons learned within apprenticeship programs in Canada.</p>	National	<p>Awareness (research activities)</p> <p>Essential skills and pre-apprenticeship training</p>	Women, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, youth, and persons with disabilities
<b>Build A Dream</b>	<p>Career Exploration Expansion</p> <p>Expand Build a Dream's trades initiatives (such as career expos, career guide, information sharing database, Dream Network Digital Experience, podcasts, hands-on exploratory workshops, Workforce Innovators Network and curriculum-related materials) and raise awareness of the skilled trades among female high school students from grade 9-12 and their parents.</p>	Ontario	Awareness (blogs, podcasts, conferences)	Women
<b>FISCAL YEAR 2020-2021</b>				
<b>ACCES Employment</b>	<p>Trades Connections – Construction Trades Project</p> <p>Provide essential skills training, as well as employment, job placement and retention services to newcomers interested in working in construction trades in the York Region.</p>	Ontario	<p>Essential skills</p> <p>Work experience</p>	Newcomers and members of racialized communities
<b>Apprenticeship Manitoba<sup>36</sup></b>	Develop and launch a new Digital Content Program for pre-apprentices in high school that focuses on increasing the participation of underrepresented groups (Indigenous people, women, members of racialized communities, and people with disabilities) in the apprenticeship system.	Manitoba	Awareness activities	

\*: completed projects

<sup>36</sup> In 2020-2021, two projects were approved: this one was put on hold for one year.

## Appendix C: Logic Model of the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program



## Appendix D: Evaluation Approach

Evaluation Questions	Lines of evidence
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Has the Program been implemented as planned?                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Have the Calls for Proposals been implemented as planned?</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Has the Program increased participants' awareness of the skilled trades as a career choice?</li> <li>3. Has the Program helped equip the participants with the skills and support they need to pursue a career in the skilled trades?</li> <li>4. Has the Program provided the participants with opportunities to explore the trades?</li> <li>5. Has the Program contributed to participants' intentions to register in an apprenticeship program or to enter the trades' workforce?</li> </ol>	<p><b>Document and project files review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Official documents:</b> planning documents, logic model, updates and briefing notes</li> <li>• <b>Project documents:</b> contribution agreements, quarterly activity reports, quarterly project data reports, final reports</li> <li>• <b>The 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 editions of the Annual Report on Apprenticeship Programs and reports</b></li> </ul>
	<p><b>Key informant interviews</b></p> <p>24 interviews with key informants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 representatives of Program officials</li> <li>• 25 representatives of 13 funded projects</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Focus groups with project participants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 30 participants in funded activities participated in the focus group discussions: 14 in awareness, 13 in training, and 3 in work experience opportunities.</li> </ul> <p>Equity-deserving groups consisted of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Youth: 12</li> <li>• Women: 11</li> <li>• Racialized communities: 5</li> <li>• Newcomers: 4</li> <li>• Persons with disabilities: 3</li> <li>• Indigenous peoples: 1</li> <li>• N/A: 3</li> </ul> <p>There were 8 groups: 3 on awareness, 2 on training, 1 on work experience and training, and 2 on awareness and training.</p>

## Appendix E: Performance Indicators of the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program

OUTPUTS	
<p><b>Output 3.1</b> Contribution agreements containing awareness, skills training and work experience activities are signed to strengthen pre-apprenticeship in Canada</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of contribution agreements signed per fiscal year</li> </ul>
SHORT TERM OUTCOMES	
<p><b>Immediate Outcome 4.1</b> Participants including equity-deserving group have access to information and opportunities to explore skilled trades as a career of choice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total number of participants in projects, including those from target groups, that offer awareness and exploration activities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Immediate Outcome 4.2</b> Participants including equity-deserving group have access to skills training that support the upgrading of employability skills</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total number of participants in projects, including those from target groups, that offer skills training or enhancements</li> </ul>
<p><b>Immediate Outcome 4.3</b> Participants including equity-deserving group have access to work experience opportunities to explore trade careers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total number of participants in projects, including those from target groups, that offer work experience opportunities</li> </ul>
MEDIUM TERM OUTCOMES	
<p><b>Intermediate Outcome 5.1</b> Participants including equity-deserving group have increased awareness and/or intend to pursue apprenticeship or a career in the trades</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total number of individuals participating in funded projects, including those from target groups, who report they have an increased awareness of the skilled trades as a career choice</li> <li>• Total number of participants who reported they intend to register in an apprenticeship program, intend to enter the trades' workforce, or intend to pursue further education</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intermediate Outcome 5.2</b> Participants including equity-deserving group have had an increase in skills and/or intend to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total number of individuals participating in funded projects, including those from target groups, who report an increase in skills</li> </ul>

## Evaluation of the Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness Program

<p>pursue apprenticeship or a career in the trades</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total number of participants who reported they intend to register in an apprenticeship program, intend to enter the trades' workforce, or intend to pursue further education</li> </ul>
<p><b>Intermediate Outcome 5.3</b> Participants including equity-deserving group have gained work experience and/or intend to pursue apprenticeship or a career in the trades</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total number of individuals participating in funded projects, including those from target groups, who report they have gained work experience</li> <li>• Total number of participants who reported they intend to register in an apprenticeship program, intend to enter the trades' workforce, or intend to pursue further education</li> </ul>
<p><b>LONG TERM OUTCOME</b></p>	
<p><b>Ultimate Outcome 6.1</b> Participants, including target groups, experience improved labour market outcomes in the skilled trades and apprenticeship</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total number of new apprenticeship registrations in Red Seal trades</li> <li>• Participants, including target groups, report having experienced improved labour market outcomes single and multiple years after the end of the program</li> </ul>



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