

Youth Jobs

Better Future

Youth Skilled Trades
Employment Strategy



About the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum

The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum – Forum canadien sur l'apprentissage (CAF-FCA) is a national, not-for-profit organization working with stakeholders in all regions of Canada. We influence pan-Canadian apprenticeship strategies through research, discussion and collaboration – sharing insights across trades, across sectors and across the country – to promote apprenticeship as an effective model for training and education.

Our Board of Directors is comprised of representatives of business, labour, the jurisdictional apprenticeship authorities, education and equity-seeking groups. Through our work, CAF-FCA has shed light on a number of key issues affecting apprenticeship, such as the perceived barriers to accessing and completing apprenticeship and the business case for apprenticeship training. For more information, visit the CAF-FCA website at www.caf-fca.org.

CAF-FCA gratefully acknowledges the support of these organizations on the project:

- British Columbia Institute of Technology
- Burnaby North Secondary School
- Catholic Centre of Immigrants Ottawa
- Dalbrae Academy
- Dartmouth High School
- George Brown College
- Markham District High School
- Middlefield Collegiate Institute
- Nova Scotia Community College
- Ottawa Catholic District School Board
- Ottawa Carleton District School Board
- Sipekne'katik First Nation
- Skills Compétences Canada
- Sir Charles Tupper Secondary School
- Windermere Secondary School

Funding for this project was provided by the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Table of Contents

1.0 Overview	4
1.1 The Challenge: A Lack of Career Awareness and Youth Unemployment	5
1.2 Workshop Format	5
1.3 Youth Participant Profile	6
1.4 Youth Influencers	6
2.0 Main Findings	7
2.1 Youth Perceptions of Skilled Trades Careers	7
2.1.1 Apprenticeship: A Viable Alternative to University	7
2.1.2 Skilled Trades Careers: Opportunities for Diverse Groups	8
2.1.3 Rewarding Work	8
2.1.4 Working as a Part of a Team	9
2.1.5 Youth Evaluation and Influencer Survey Results	9
2.2 Barriers	11
2.2.1 Lack of Awareness	11
2.2.2 Expectations of Family and Friends	11
2.2.3 Trades Suitability	12
2.2.4 Cost	13
2.2.5 Essential Skills	13
2.2.6 Lack of Mentors and Role Models	13
2.2.7 Finding an Employer Sponsor	14
2.2.8 Transportation	15
2.2.9 Youth Influencer Survey Results	15
2.3 Solutions	16
2.3.1 Create Awareness about Careers in Skilled Trades	16
2.3.2 Encourage Youth to Cultivate Personal Attributes for Success	17
2.3.3 Assist Youth in Developing a Resume and Practicing their Interview Skills	17
2.3.4 Provide Tools and Equipment	17
2.3.5 Deliver Safety Training	17
2.3.6 Offer Tutoring	18
2.3.7 Educate Youth about Business and Taking Initiative	18
2.3.8 Develop Youth Networking Skills	19
2.3.9 Provide Work Experience Opportunities	20
2.3.10 Provide Youth with Accessible Transportation	21
2.3.11 Support Mentoring	21
2.3.12 Support Diverse Youth	21
2.3.13 Youth Evaluation and Youth Influencer Survey Results	22
3.0 Conclusion	26

Table of Figures

Figure 1: Skilled Trades Career Benefits: Impressions from Youth	8
Figure 2: Diverse Youth Career Decision Motivators	9
Figure 3: Factors Attracting Diverse Youth to the Trades	10
Figure 4: Youth Fears about Pursuing Careers in the Skilled Trades	12
Figure 5: Barriers for Immigrant Youth	12
Figure 6: Barriers Experienced by Diverse Youth	15
Figure 7: Youth Envisioning a Future Career	16
Figure 8: “Gearing Up” for Success: Supports for Youth	19
Figure 9: Preferred Youth Supports	22
Figure 10: Top Priorities	23
Figure 11: Supports for Diverse Youth	24
Figure 12: Strategies for Combatting Youth Unemployment	24

1.0

Overview

The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum – Forum canadien sur l'apprentissage (CAF-FCA) wanted to understand what today's youth, especially diverse youth, are thinking about skilled trades careers. This report integrates feedback from youth workshop participants (aged 14 to 25) (N=232) and their influencers, who completed an online survey (N=41).



1.1 The Challenge: A Lack of Career Awareness and Youth Unemployment

Limited awareness and knowledge about apprenticeship and skilled trades careers among youth remains a barrier and strategic priority requiring action.¹ Youth indicate a preference for university as a “first choice” post-secondary option and say their guidance counsellors, parents and friends do not encourage them to pursue skilled trades careers.² Despite many career awareness initiatives to promote the skilled trades, challenges remain. For schools with limited resources, it may be difficult to offer trades classes with up-to-date equipment, off-campus career exploration opportunities or one-on-one career counselling. Other schools may lack trades champions or local employers willing to hire youth. Successful local initiatives can be difficult to scale up to reach youth across the country.

Youth unemployment also remains an ongoing challenge in the labour market. Youth with limited experience and networking contacts often struggle to find work. According to the December 2017 Labour Force Survey, the youth unemployment rate in Canada is 10.3 per cent whereas the adult unemployment rate is 5.7 per cent.³ Today’s youth are making slower transitions to the workforce, are more likely to work part-time and tend to earn less in full-time work than previous generations.⁴

Indigenous peoples and immigrants experience higher unemployment rates than non-Indigenous and non-immigrant groups.⁵ Given population growth in these communities, understanding different cultural and generational values is crucial to developing effective recruitment strategies, human resource policies and workplace practices.⁶

1.2 Workshop Format

CAF-FCA hosted three regional workshops with diverse youth in Burnaby, British Columbia (N=42), Halifax, Nova Scotia (N=33) and Toronto, Ontario (N=37). One national workshop (N=120) was hosted in Ottawa, Ontario. At the workshops, CAF-FCA debunked common myths about skilled trades careers, gave an overview of the apprenticeship pathway and provided links to provincial and college resources. Videos of apprentices and journeypersons talking about their careers in the skilled trades were shared. At the national workshop, CAF-FCA moderated an apprentice panel and brought in a speaker to talk about the unique skills millennials bring to the workforce.

At the workshops, youth shared their perception of skilled trades careers and discussed barriers and strategies associated with youth unemployment. Peer-to-peer discussion in small groups allowed participants from different cultures and genders to share their unique ideas and experiences. Skilled trades students and apprentices guided regional workshop discussions. At the national workshop, competitors at WorldSkills 2017 in Abu Dhabi moderated the small-group discussions. High school teachers captured key discussion points and offered observations. Youth completed an evaluation at the end of the event.

¹ See the Future of Apprenticeship webinars on CAF-FCA's YouTube channel and the Future of Apprenticeship conference dialogue summary on CAF-FCA's website: www.caf-fca.org.

² Results from a youth survey in 2004 are compared to 2013. See: CAF-FCA, Apprenticeship Analysis: Youth Perceptions of Careers in the Skilled Trades. (Ottawa: CAF-FCA, September 2013).

³ Statistics Canada defines youth as 15 to 24. For more information about employment in Canada see the Statistics Canada, December 2017 Labour Force Survey: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/180105/t001a-eng.htm>, and <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/180105/dq180105a-eng.htm>.

⁴ See: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-630-x/11-630-x2017004-eng.htm>.

⁵ See information about Indigenous peoples and immigrants in the labour market: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/170316/dq170316d-eng.htm>, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/71-606-x/2012006/part-partie1-eng.htm>, and <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/101/cst01/labor90a-eng.htm>.

⁶ The Aboriginal population is much younger than the non-Aboriginal population, which is due to higher fertility rates and shorter life expectancy. See: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/89-503-x/2015001/article/14313-eng.htm>. For information about immigrant population growth see: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/171025/dq171025b-eng.htm>.

1.3 Youth Participant Profile

Youth were recruited from local high schools (mostly Grade 10 to 12) and community agencies. Some participants had minimal knowledge about apprenticeship while others had already selected a trade they wanted to pursue. Youth participants came from diverse backgrounds, including Indigenous communities and immigrants from Bahamas, China, India, Nigeria, Lebanon, Somalia, Syria, Yemen and Zimbabwe. Translators helped Syrian refugees still learning English and French understand the content. There was an equal mix of females and males.

1.4 Youth Influencers

CAF-FCA distributed an online survey link to gather feedback from those directly involved in youth programming or policy. The survey focused specifically on diverse youth because CAF-FCA was interested in identifying the unique challenges faced by immigrants, women and Indigenous youth. CAF-FCA solicited feedback from 41 influencers including policymakers and administrators,⁷ high school teachers,⁸ Indigenous and immigrant-serving organizations,⁹ community-based organizations¹⁰ and those who identified as “other,” including one employer.¹¹



⁷N=17 of 41

⁸N=11 of 41

⁹N=5 of 41

¹⁰N=4 of 41

¹¹N=4 of 41 Other than the employer, the three “other” respondents did not identify their occupations.

2.0

Main Findings

2.1 Youth Perceptions of Skilled Trades Careers

2.1.1 Apprenticeship: A Viable Alternative to University

After the workshops, youth reported a realization that a university degree is not the only pathway to a successful career. They saw value in gaining practical skills applicable to specific work environments as opposed to the more generic skills developed at university. Learning in a shop rather than a lecture hall appealed to students, as did firsthand exposure to the world of work. Some liked the idea of working outdoors and being active. Minimizing student debt, getting paid while training and being well-paid upon completion were seen as the primary advantages of an apprenticeship. Youth learned that grants and loans are available to help offset the cost of their training. Building a career based on a hobby they enjoy was viewed as positive by many workshop participants. The possibility of owning a business made youth realize that careers in the trades provide opportunities for career advancement and progression.

Some youth aspired to participate in Skills Canada competitions, emulating the WorldSkills ambassadors. WorldSkills competitors indicated this experience was invaluable, fast tracking their skills development and increasing employment opportunities. Some received job offers from employers at the competitions.

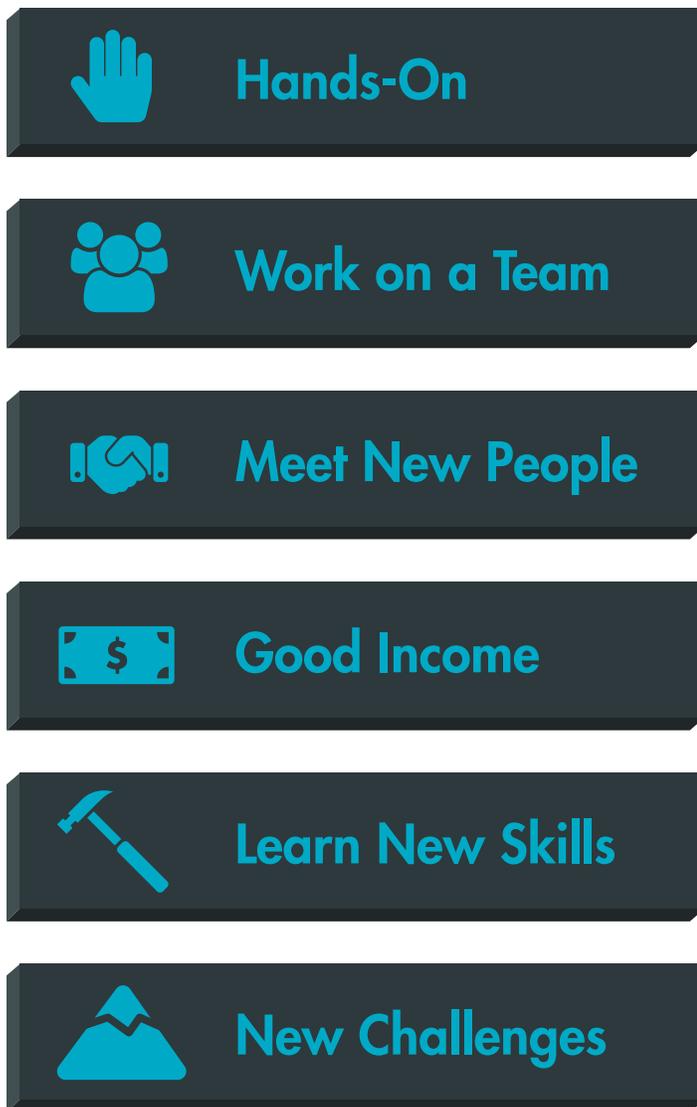


2.1.2 Skilled Trades Careers: Opportunities for Diverse Groups

Men, women and racially diverse groups are equally capable of excelling in skilled trades careers. For some youth, particularly women and immigrants, pursuing a “non-traditional” pathway excited them.

The Careers in Trades website encourages youth to learn about trade occupations and the benefits of skilled trades careers. The website has resources for youth, educators and parents and receives more than 150,000 visitors per year.

Figure 1: Skilled Trades Career Benefits: Impressions from Youth

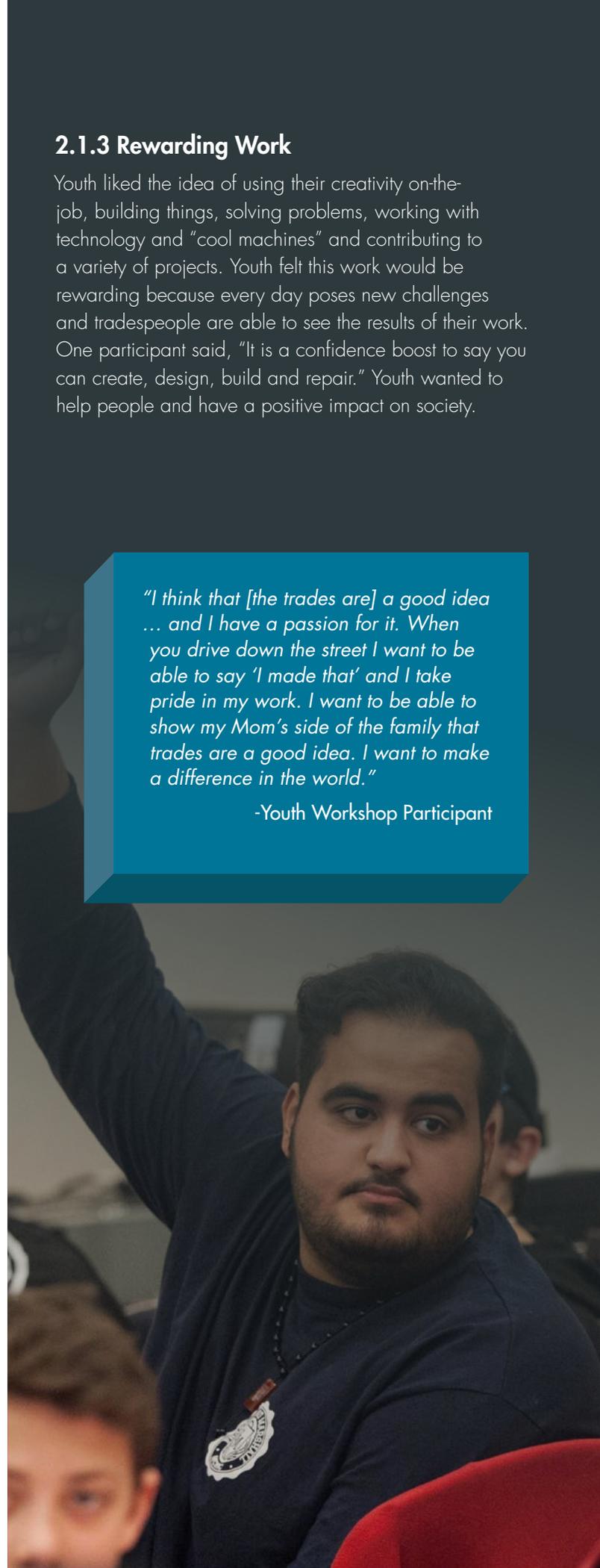


2.1.3 Rewarding Work

Youth liked the idea of using their creativity on-the-job, building things, solving problems, working with technology and “cool machines” and contributing to a variety of projects. Youth felt this work would be rewarding because every day poses new challenges and tradespeople are able to see the results of their work. One participant said, “It is a confidence boost to say you can create, design, build and repair.” Youth wanted to help people and have a positive impact on society.

“I think that [the trades are] a good idea ... and I have a passion for it. When you drive down the street I want to be able to say ‘I made that’ and I take pride in my work. I want to be able to show my Mom’s side of the family that trades are a good idea. I want to make a difference in the world.”

-Youth Workshop Participant



2.1.4 Working as a Part of a Team

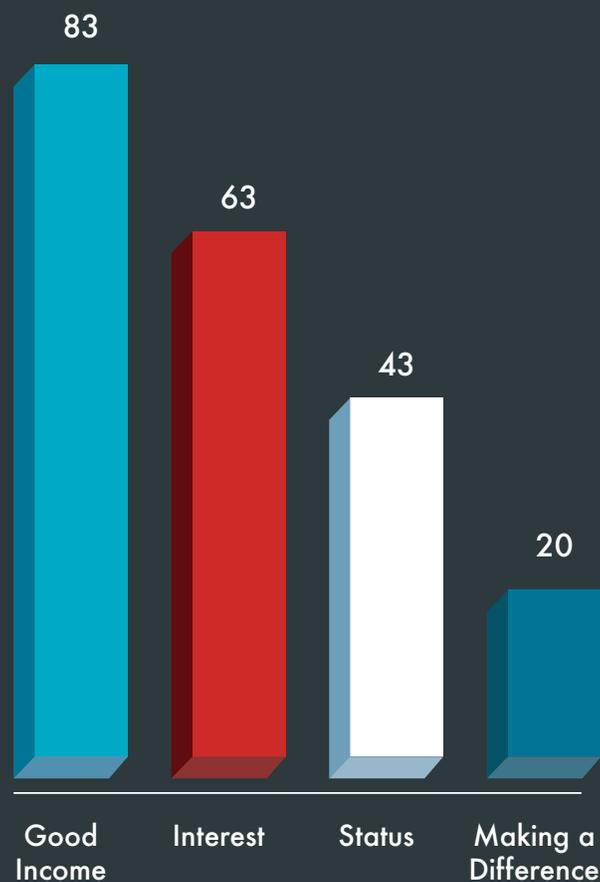
Youth liked the idea of meeting new people on projects and working as a team with people who share their passion. The opportunities for continuous learning, gathering new perspectives from different teachers, mentors, colleagues and employers and one-on-one mentoring excited youth.

2.1.5 Youth Evaluation and Influencer Survey Results

After attending the workshops, youth (N=146) completed evaluation forms. Youth agreed they learned valuable information about apprenticeship and skilled trades careers (97 per cent)¹². Most were interested in learning more (86 per cent)¹³ and sharing what they learned with friends, parents, teachers and fellow youth (83 per cent).¹⁴

Influencers identified what motivates diverse youth when making career decisions. Influencers said a good income (83 per cent), personal interest and enjoyment in the work (63 per cent), status and respect (43 per cent) and making a difference in their community (20 per cent) were important motivators. Diverse youth rely on their parents (78 per cent), friends (50 per cent), teachers (45 per cent), guidance and job counsellors (33 per cent), members of their community or religious organizations (23 per cent) and "other" groups (3 per cent) when making career decisions.¹⁵

Figure 2: Diverse Youth Career Decision Motivators as identified by Youth Influencers



¹² N=141 of 146

¹³ N=125 of 146

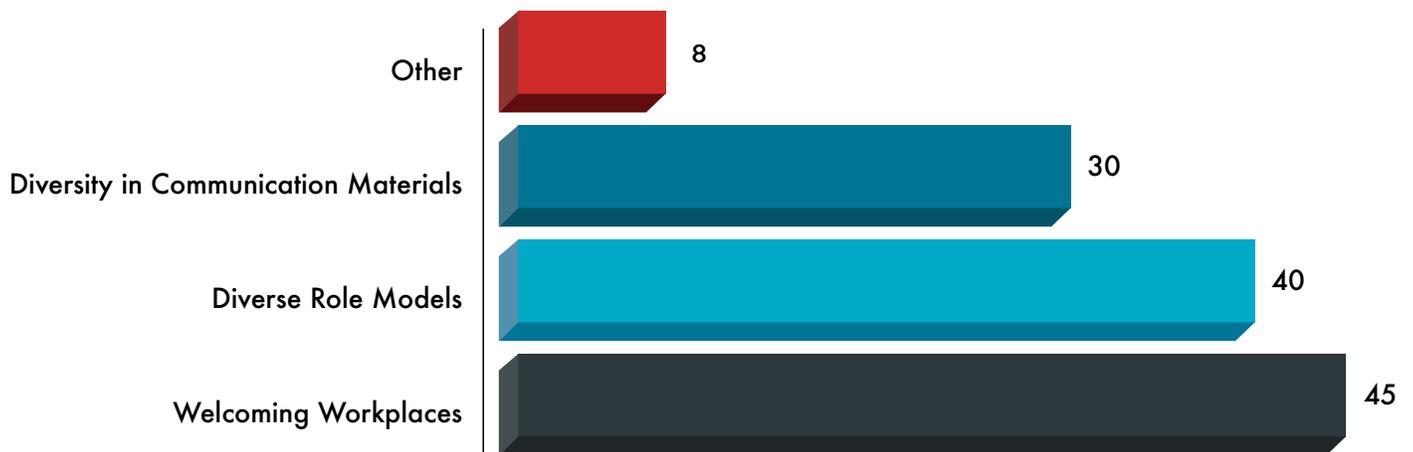
¹⁴ N=121 of 146

¹⁵ N=41. Those who answered "other" did not describe the additional groups influencing youth. Multiple responses were accepted for this answer.

Influencers felt welcoming workplaces (45 per cent), diverse role models (40 per cent) and the representation of diverse tradespeople in pictures and communication materials (30 per cent) would attract diverse youth to the trades. Respondents answering “other” (8 per cent) said diverse youth need to see people from their communities take on leadership positions in the trades, demonstrating career progression is possible. The available job opportunities need to be understood.¹⁶



Figure 3: Factors Attracting Diverse Youth to the Trades as identified by Youth Influencers



“This is a very exciting time in Canada’s history. We have the chance, right now, to engage and excite today’s youth to continue building our great nation! To do this, we need to address and highlight their ‘GenZ’ or ‘iGen’ characteristics. Indicators show that this group will be educated, interested in making a difference and will learn and do things differently than their older peers and parents (i.e. social media, communication and living simply). Keys now include highlighting the prestige of skilled trades to the parent community, helping foster fact-based conversations, messaging the transportability of the Red Seal for an ‘on-the-move’ generation and letting youth see [the potential for]...diverse work opportunities throughout their careers. Essentially, we need to tap into who they are to help engage them in conversation.”

-Youth Influencer Survey Respondent



¹⁶ N=41 Multiple responses were accepted for this answer.

2.2 Barriers

2.2.1 Lack of Awareness

Youth identified barriers preventing them from pursuing apprenticeships and careers in the skilled trades. Awareness of these barriers stand to help industry, apprenticeship administrators and educators address gaps in their promotional materials and youth programming.

Youth pointed to their own lack of knowledge about the trades and the need for greater awareness. Youth suggested they should be exposed to trades-related activities, potentially opening up career options they did not previously realize were available. Youth felt they did not know enough about available college programs, apprenticeship or health and safety requirements. Some participants said they learned about youth apprenticeship programs too late in high school, while others indicated their schools did not offer trades courses. If they indicated an interest, students were directed to college or government resources, but many felt unsure about where to begin and were overwhelmed by the number of trades occupations available.

While there are many trades-related career resources offered across the country, student access is not consistent. School board priorities may not include trades programming. Low-income students may lack the financial resources to participate in paid activities and/or lack the internet access required to review online resources. Youth and their parents whose first language is not English or French may struggle to understand career awareness materials.

2.2.2 Expectations of Family and Friends

Youth said their teachers, parents, grandparents, friends, peers and society discourage them from pursuing skilled trades careers. Immigrant youth said, in their culture, skilled trades occupations are not perceived as “respectable” occupations and there is intense family pressure to pursue “professional” occupations, such as a lawyer or accountant. Youth worried about the stigma associated with being a skilled tradesperson because office jobs are perceived as more prestigious. Many immigrant parents made sacrifices to give their children a better life, so youth feel pressured to live up to those expectations. Some students felt a journey person’s salary would not be high enough to satisfy their parents. Youth recognized their relatives lack accurate information about the trades.

Youth worried about taking trades classes and being separated from their friends at school. One youth said, “It’s not what your peers and friends want to do...you don’t want to lose them by going a completely different route in school.”

“Youth and their families have a significant stigma against the trades because they lack awareness, especially new Canadians. The sacrifice [immigrant parents] have made requires more [time] for them to understand labour market opportunities.”

-Youth Workshop Participant

“Youth...don’t equate a 4-year trades program the same as a 4-year bachelor program. I tell them it’s the same educational commitment. So many parents promote college or university to their child. We need to change the language.”

-Youth Influencer Survey Respondent

Figure 4: Youth Fears about Pursuing Careers in the Skilled Trades



Figure 5: Barriers for Immigrant Youth



2.2.3 Trades Suitability

Youth were unsure if the trades were the “right fit” for them and lacked confidence in themselves. Students suggested they were nervous about trying something new and feared failure. They were concerned that they didn’t know the right questions to ask, contributing to a weakness in understanding whether jobs were available. Youth sought a realistic assessment of trades work. To deal with these concerns, many career counselors and teachers encourage youth to do research about various trades, understand post-secondary requirements and offer youth opportunities to learn directly from industry representatives.

Their levels of physical fitness and passing a drug and alcohol test, which is hiring requirement for some employers, were concerns for some youth. Youth worried they could not obtain employment or workplace accommodations due to mental or physical disabilities, or health concerns such as asthma.



2.2.4 Cost

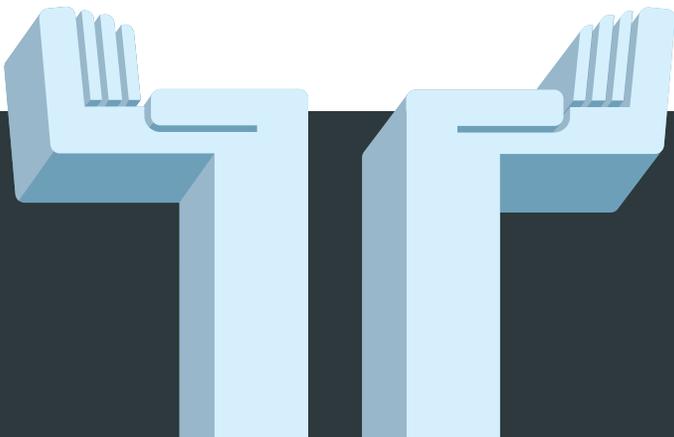
Despite the grants and loans available, youth were concerned about the cost of training, especially if they pursue a pre-apprenticeship program or college diploma prior to securing an apprenticeship training opportunity. Many immigrant youth support their families financially and do not receive help from their parents when paying for tools, uniforms, food, tuition or transportation. Youth acknowledged learning more about financial management would help them save money for their education. Learning about financial literacy, accounting and taxes would better prepare youth for the workforce, especially for those planning to be managers or business owners.

2.2.5 Essential Skills

Some youth expressed concerns about bridging the gap between theoretical learning and hands-on training components. They suggested improving their math, science and language skills prior to securing an apprenticeship was important. Youth were anxious their grades were not high enough for entry into a college trades program.

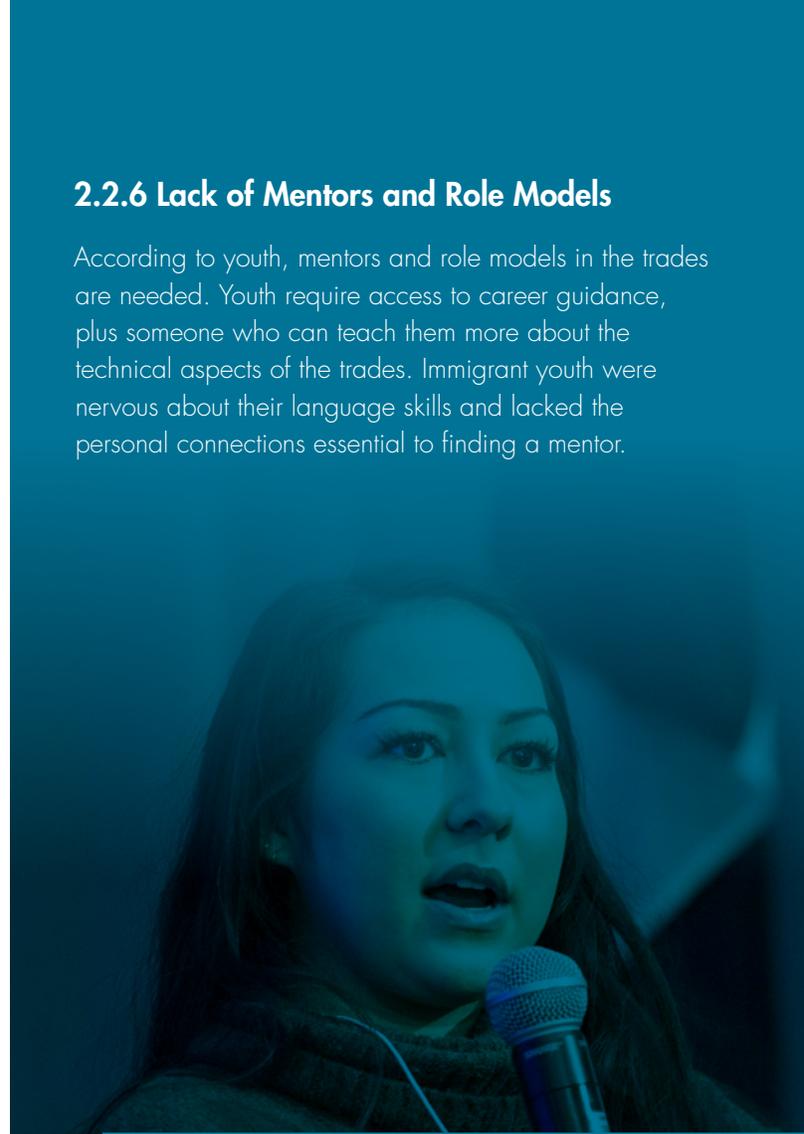
The federal government offers tools for prospective apprentices to learn about the skills tradespeople use every day on-the-job. Trade-specific practice questions are available. Many colleges, unions and employers offer tutoring for apprentices struggling with essential skills.

SUPPORT



2.2.6 Lack of Mentors and Role Models

According to youth, mentors and role models in the trades are needed. Youth require access to career guidance, plus someone who can teach them more about the technical aspects of the trades. Immigrant youth were nervous about their language skills and lacked the personal connections essential to finding a mentor.



“The number one issue is kids need a good role model, someone who can give them guidance and get them to the point where they have the confidence needed to succeed. Kids don’t always understand the rules such as the blue book¹⁷ and how employers use it. As more and more youth move into urban areas, we constantly need to be marketing the resources available. Mentorship, guidance and knowledge of resources have been challenges in the past. Getting a client to the point of being able to enter the trades by obtaining related high school courses is a very good start.”

-Youth Influencer Survey Respondent

¹⁷The blue book is also known as a log book, which is used to document apprentice skills progression over the training period.

2.2.7 Finding an Employer Sponsor

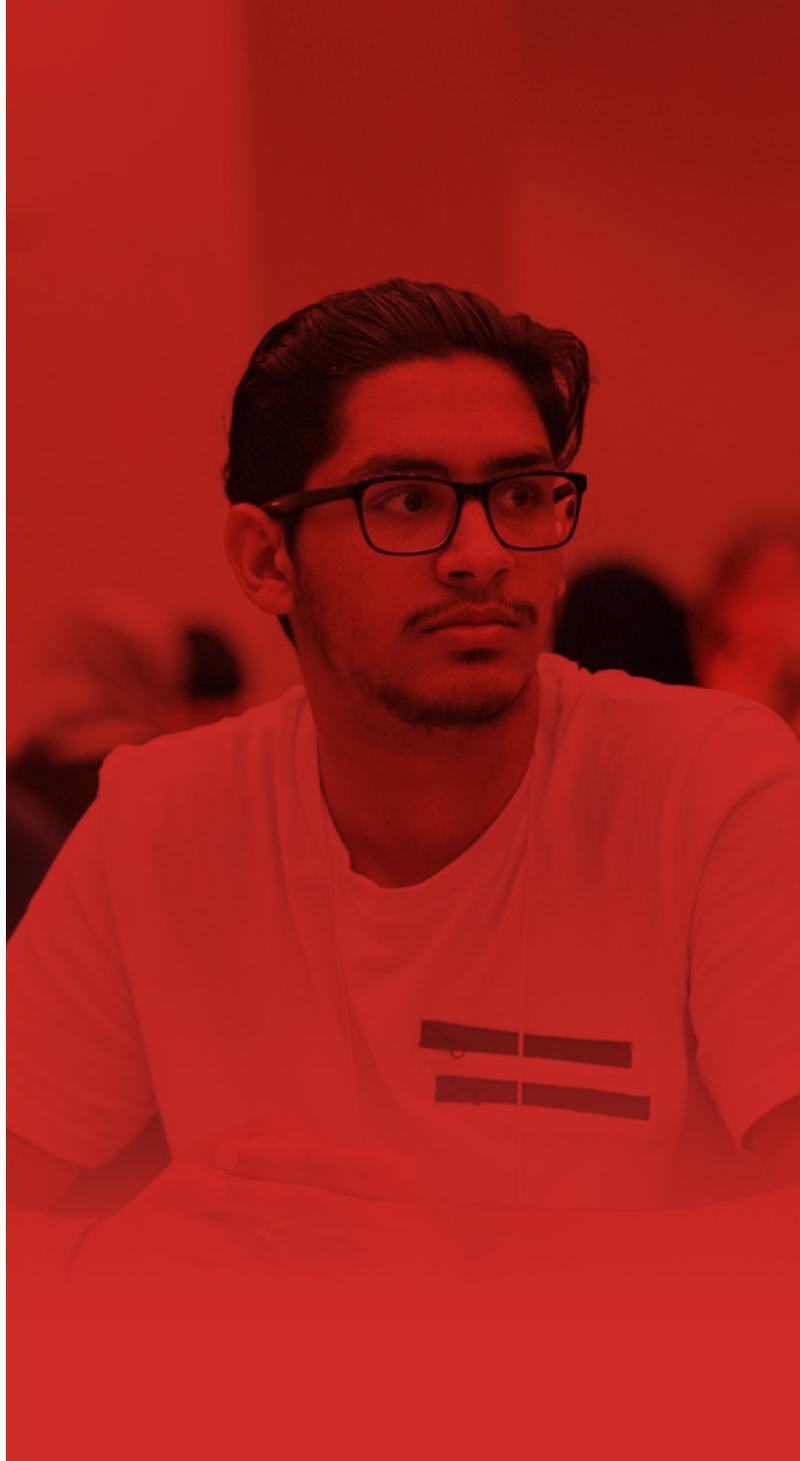
Youth agreed finding an employer sponsor was a major barrier to pursuing an apprenticeship. Youth were unsure about how to search for jobs and expressed skepticism about securing an employer sponsor when they lack experience.

Youth said they lack personal contacts and networks, and suggested they need advice and tips about how to find a job in the skilled trades environment. Often job opportunities arise through informal conversations and youth should understand how to leverage these opportunities.

Youth lacked confidence about approaching employers and participating in interviews. As one youth commented, "You are really nervous and then it looks like you are not confident or you don't know what you are doing!" Another said, "As high school [students], we don't know anything and are afraid to go to a job when we don't know anything." Students suggested there are limited employment and training opportunities for youth, with few entry-level positions or youth-focused programs.

According to workshop participants, stereotypes about young people and diverse groups prevent them from obtaining positions. If they are without a job, they feel employers perceive them as "non-starters." Immigrants, Indigenous youth and female participants worried they would not get hired due to employer bias and worried about how they would be treated in the workplace. These youth believed employers are not comfortable hiring "non-traditional" candidates. While many employers are actively seeking more diverse candidates, diverse youth do not perceive this to be the case.

Youth acknowledged they will likely start out doing basic tasks and work their way up to more exciting and complex tasks if they work hard. One youth participant commented, "Don't complain about it. Show leadership. Put yourself out there." Every employer has a different way of doing things and a unique company culture. Youth should observe and be open to learning new things.



"One of the key barriers for youth is the lack of work experience opportunities. During the 70s and 80s, youth usually had the opportunity to engage in paid summer work, which provided an opportunity to explore different jobs. [Summer jobs] provided a career-building opportunity for young adults. Unfortunately, these [jobs] are missing in the development process of young adults today..."

-Youth Influencer Survey Respondent

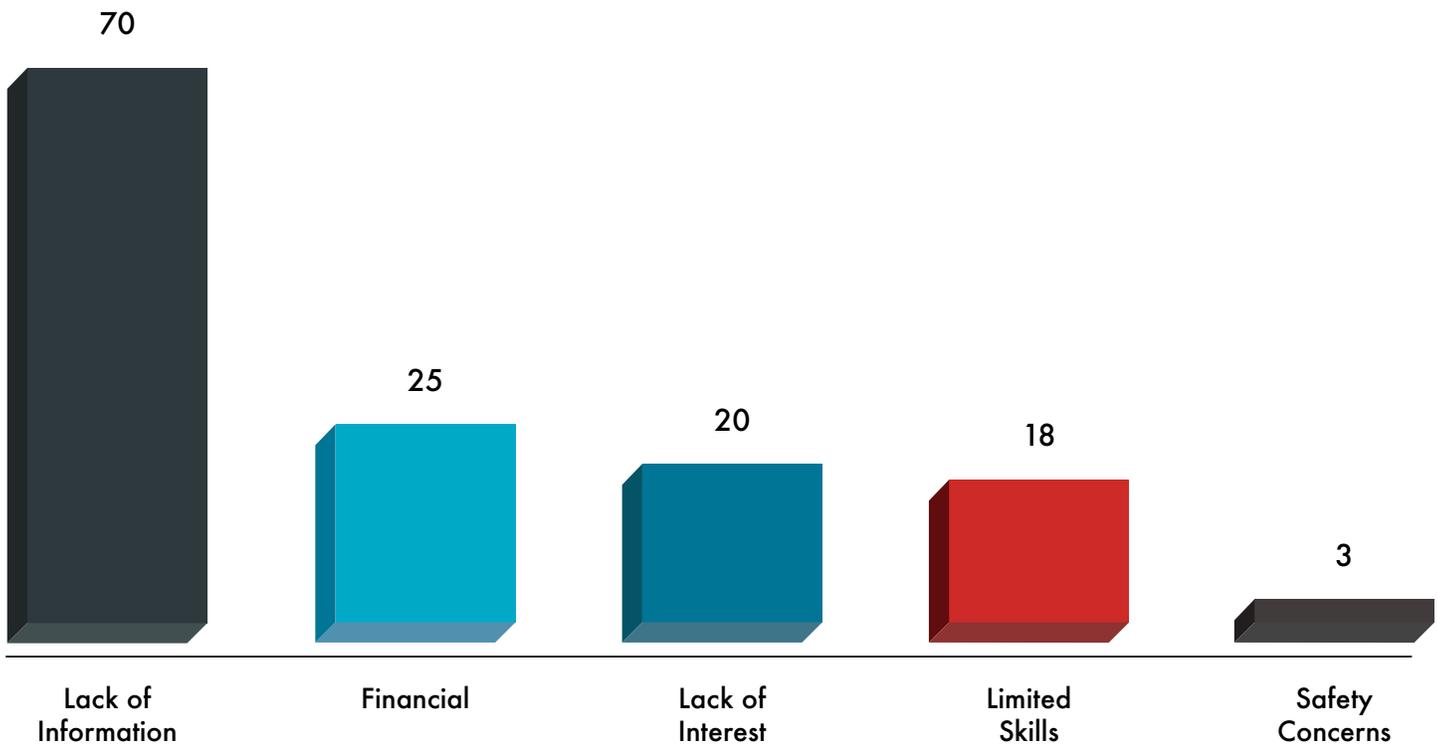
2.2.8 Transportation

A common concern among youth was the lack of available transportation to get to and from work, especially for those living in rural areas. Public transportation may be unavailable to certain work sites or service is infrequent.

2.2.9 Youth Influencer Survey Results¹⁸

Youth influencers identified barriers preventing diverse youth from entering the trades. A lack of information (70 per cent), financial barriers (25 per cent), a lack of interest (20 per cent), limited skills (18 per cent) or safety concerns (3 per cent) were mentioned. When asked about family and cultural bias, 50 per cent of influencers said parents and grandparents do not support diverse youth entering the trades and 28 per cent said certain cultures “look down” upon skilled trades careers.¹⁹

Figure 6: Barriers Experienced by Diverse Youth as identified by Youth Influencers



Influencers discussed additional barriers in their comments. Many diverse youth lack personal connections, making it difficult for them to secure employer sponsors or employment. A youth influencer said there are a limited number of skilled trades employers and journeypersons in remote areas where First Nations youth are living.

One youth influencer felt that youth lack opportunities to see skilled tradespeople at work in their communities. Youth should have visibility into the ways tradespeople contribute to the towns and cities where they live.

Another youth influencer talked about funding challenges. The government tends to put trades in the spotlight when there is a shortage of tradespeople. Shifting government priorities and trades programming cuts make sustaining youth interest difficult. Consistent funding might stabilize youth interest.

¹⁸ There were no relevant youth evaluation results related to this question.

¹⁹ N=41 Multiple responses were accepted for this answer.

2.3 Solutions

2.3.1 Create Awareness about Careers in Skilled Trades

Youth said creating awareness about apprenticeship and careers in the skilled trades was important. They suggested promoting skilled trades careers using social media and advertising on subways and billboards. Apprentices are great advocates for apprenticeship training and positively influence youth considering these careers. Apprentices should be encouraged to share their stories with others.

Learning about the wide range of trades and the jobs available in Canada and internationally appealed to youth. Career fairs, school assemblies, field trips, job shadowing, employer talks at the school and hands-on exposure are ways youth can learn about the occupations and pathways available. Attending trade camps offer great exposure. Students in schools without trades or technology courses need access to try-a-trade

programs. Youth said they would like more apprenticeship information available at their schools. Counsellors require specialized training to guide students to apprenticeship. Teachers at the workshops suggested more information about labour market trends and employers willing to hire young people would be useful.

Resources tailored to immigrant parents should challenge their assumptions about skilled trades careers and address their unique concerns. Youth suggested hosting an open house so parents can see their children working on a trades project and observe their passion. Students said they should talk to their parents about their career plans and explain why apprenticeship is a good option.

Figure 7: Youth Envisioning a Future Career

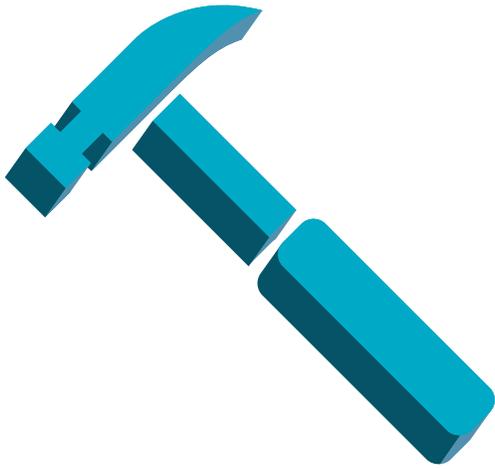


"Exposure to skilled trades in high school has been a very important part in my journey. I believe more schools should start exposing students to the trades."

-Youth Workshop Participant

"The trades are a very good option, but are not considered often enough. Changing the social perceptions is probably the most important change."

-Youth Workshop Participant



2.3.2 Encourage Youth to Cultivate Personal Attributes for Success

Youth realized developing certain characteristics and behaviours will help them secure employment. Youth identified these traits as desirable: working hard, being honest, mature and prepared, hanging around the right people, not getting distracted, trying your best, arriving on time, respecting the boss and co-workers and learning new ideas with an open mind. Teachers observed youth need to learn these life skills, but will struggle if they are too sheltered by their parents.

2.3.3 Assist Youth in Developing a Résumé and Practicing their Interview Skills

Résumé writing, job search strategies and interview skills were priority areas where youth sought help. Companies have different interview styles and “thinking on your feet” was viewed as difficult for inexperienced youth. Students felt that practicing their answers in role-playing scenarios would help them feel more confident during interviews.

2.3.4 Provide Tools and Equipment

Donated tools and equipment would help those starting out in the trades, especially Indigenous and immigrant youth, who may lack the financial resources to purchase their own tools. A lending library for tools could reduce costs. Special equipment loans or grants for trades with more expensive equipment should be considered.

2.3.5 Deliver Safety Training

Youth understood the importance of health and safety in the trades and suggested they are open to training. They wanted to know how to earn their safety certifications in First Aid, Occupational Health and Safety and the Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System.

“In addition to being tech savvy, youth should be flexible, observant, hard-working and willing to multi-task and take pride in their work.”

-Youth Workshop Participant

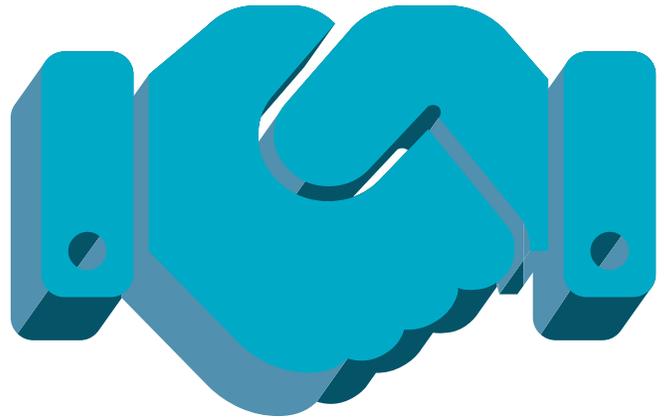


2.3.6 Offer Tutoring

Youth recognized the necessity of attending class and tutoring to improve their math, science and language skills. Some workshop participants were Syrian refugees committed to improving their language skills before seeking employment.

2.3.7 Educate Youth about Business and Taking Initiative

According to the workshop participants, mandatory classes teaching youth about leadership, initiative and operating a business would prepare those interested in becoming future business owners or managers. Youth should proactively seek out opportunities if they wish to be entrepreneurs. Taking initiative by volunteering, shovelling driveways or completing other small jobs may be a starting point leading to other opportunities. Doing chores and part-time work helps build work ethic and provides exposure to “real world” work environments.



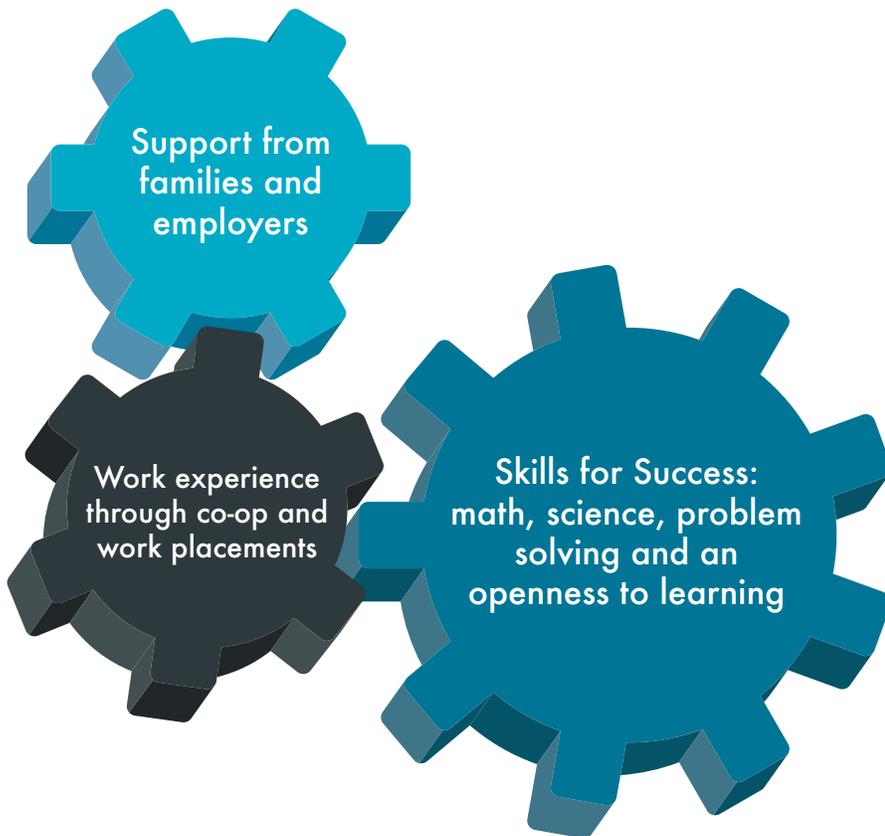
2.3.8 Develop Youth Networking Skills

Youth recognized the difficulties of connecting with an employer when seeking an apprenticeship and suggested they need advice and practical tips for making initial connections. Youth felt learning how to leverage existing networks through volunteer opportunities, teachers, peers and family is key. Managing informal conversations with employers is also important. Immigrants, who may lack an extended network, wanted to learn about social norms and etiquette for networking in Canada.

Teachers can help students by facilitating stronger connections between schools and local employers. Course content should align with relevant workplace skills to the degree possible. Youth indicated they would like to attend events with multiple employers or connect with an organization that connects young people to employers. They suggested trades-specific events would have value by connecting employers to youth serious about pursuing a trade. Young people are looking for employers who are open-minded and genuinely interested in hiring them. Employers may require support in understanding the benefits of hiring youth and how to integrate them into their workforces.

Youth, inspired by trades students and WorldSkills participants at the national workshop, also thought there would be value in networking opportunities with apprentices and journeypersons, whether in-person or online. Talking to apprentices who have relocated would help youth understand the realities of pursuing an apprenticeship in another jurisdiction.

Figure 8: “Gearing Up” for Success: Supports for Youth



The Skilled Trades Network centralizes information about the skilled trades. The Network has videos and podcasts of apprentices and journeypersons talking about how they overcame challenges during their apprenticeships. The “Ask an Expert” function allows users to ask pertinent questions about apprenticeship. Answers are provided by industry and jurisdictional experts.

2.3.9 Provide Work Experience Opportunities

Co-op and work placements, summer jobs and youth apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs offer valuable work experience. Participants felt youth apprenticeship and co-op programs should be advertised more at high school. Making co-op mandatory would give a greater number of youth initial work experience.

Employers hiring youth with limited experience should receive incentives. Youth suggested wage subsidy programs during the summer would encourage employers to hire them. Small businesses should participate in co-op programs. Employers willing to hire youth should advertise job opportunities within high schools, community centers, the library and on job boards, Snapchat, Facebook, Kijiji and Twitter.



"Employers need to be engaged to do their part to foster young people before they leave high school. This can take the form of site tours, job shadow, cooperative education or summer employment. These efforts then need to be highlighted and celebrated in the press, so the community sees this commitment and parents and guardians can see the possibilities of success for their children heading into the future."

-Youth Influencer Survey Respondent

"I believe providing good, meaningful opportunities for industry, employers and youth will make a big difference and opportunities will flow from that such as apprenticeships, knowledge of the skill set required, etc. The research shows five quality employer connections before leaving school will increase youth achievement in their career later in life due increased confidence. We too often connect them with one employer and leave it at that. They need to meet several and understand several environments in a more casual way before feeling they have made a good career choice. Good quality [connections] don't have to mean a lot of time, it could mean 'speed dating' circles, it could mean employer workplace tours and visits. The ultimate goal is better understanding and confidence in [a chosen] career path, not merely employment. Industry, schools and other influencing agencies need to work to find points to connect and bring trades classes and business classes to life."

-Youth Influencer Survey Respondent

2.3.10 Provide Youth with Accessible Transportation

Government could help youth by investing in affordable public transportation so youth can travel to work without buying a car.

2.3.11 Support Mentoring

Youth said good mentoring is essential when learning the technical aspects of the trade, but also when navigating a career path. Learning life lessons from mentors empowers those just starting their careers. Young people should be encouraged to give back by becoming mentors themselves. Youth emphasized the importance of good communication skills so they can engage effectively with their mentors. Giving youth practical strategies for dealing with a mentor enables them to build better relationships. On-the-job, youth said buddies who can show them around the worksite and introduce them to the team would make them feel less apprehensive. Although employers assign apprentices a journey person mentor, youth would like events where they could meet potential career and other trades mentors. Indigenous youth, in particular, require mentorship and guidance when pursuing skilled trades careers. Indigenous youth talked about the importance of receiving teachings from elders.

"Understand that nobody's perfect and we're all learning. Don't be afraid to ask questions."

-Youth Workshop Participant

2.3.12 Support Diverse Youth

Youth said employers and employees should learn about what diverse groups such as women and immigrants contribute to the workplace. Cultural awareness training should be offered so these groups feel welcomed when arriving onsite. Diverse youth may require additional financial supports when pursuing skilled trades careers.

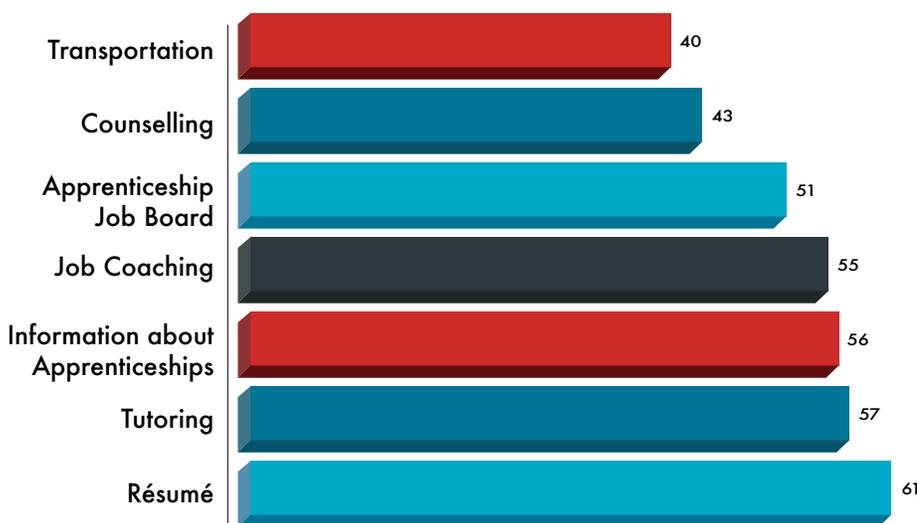
"Mentoring has been a key factor assisting youth with understanding trades/employment. Female mentors working in non-traditional trades and with a diverse background impacts awareness and promotion of the trades [among women]."

-Youth Influencer Survey Respondent

2.3.13 Youth Evaluation and Youth Influencer Survey Results

Youth workshop participants identified help with their résumés (61 per cent)²⁰ as their most needed support, followed by tutoring (57 per cent),²¹ information about apprenticeships (56 per cent),²² job coaching (55 per cent),²³ an apprenticeship job board (51 per cent),²⁴ counselling (43 per cent)²⁵ and transportation (40 per cent).²⁶

Figure 9: Preferred Youth Supports



Influencers believe providing more work experience programs (78 per cent), facilitating networking between employers and youth (75 per cent), essential and employability skills training (63 per cent), better information about available job opportunities (58 per cent) and creating youth awareness about their responsibilities on-the-job (30 per cent) are the top priorities for government and the apprenticeship community.²⁷

²⁰ N=89 of 146

²¹ N=83 of 146

²² N=82 of 146

²³ N=81 of 146

²⁴ N=74 of 146

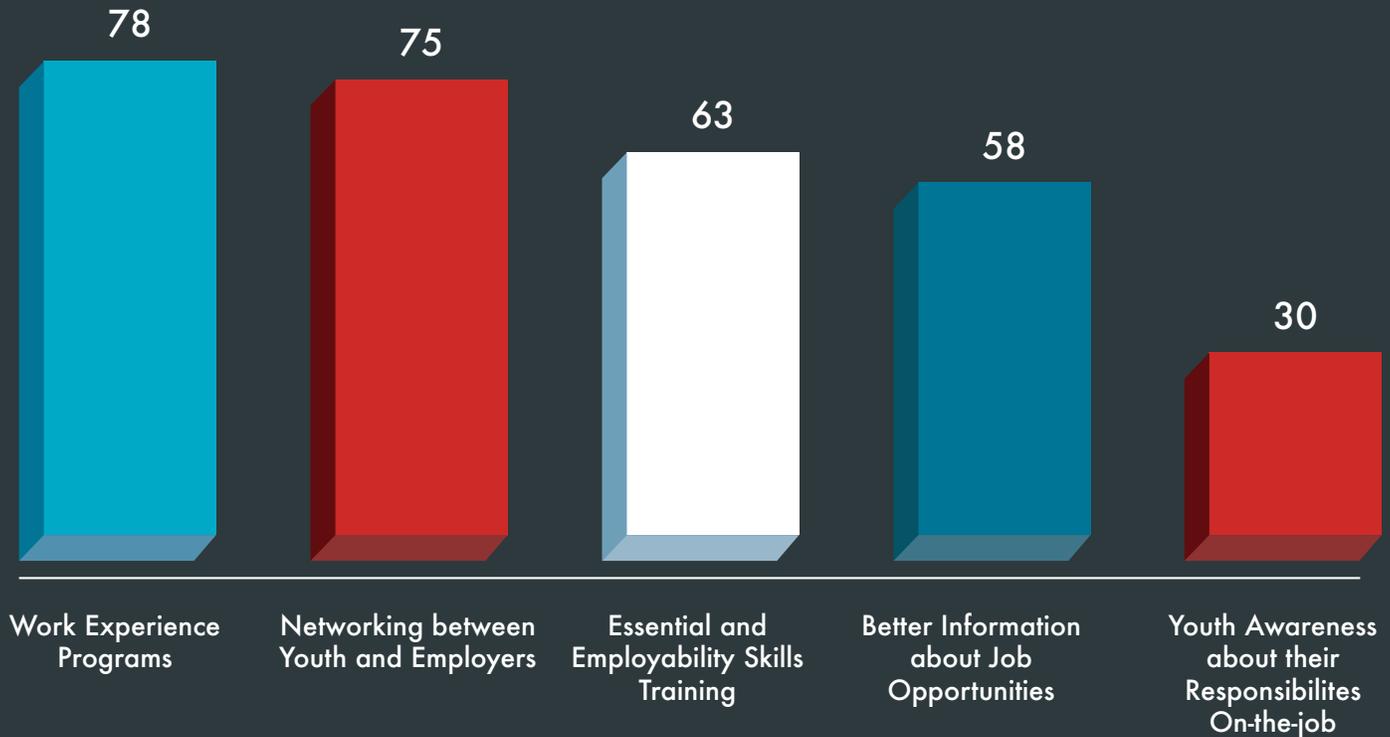
²⁵ N=63 of 146

²⁶ N=59 of 146 Multiple responses were accepted for this answer.

²⁷ N=41 Multiple responses were accepted for this answer.



Figure 10: Top Priorities as identified by Youth Influencers



Helping diverse youth pursue apprenticeships and skilled trades careers requires mentors guiding the process (78 per cent), practical help in finding apprenticeships (73 per cent), networking opportunities with employers (58 per cent), information about the trades (53 per cent), welcoming workplaces (38 per cent), communication materials addressing their unique issues and concerns (20 per cent), help creating a skilled trades résumé and job searching strategies (15 per cent). “Other” responses (5 per cent) included educating parents and teachers about the opportunities in the trades and promoting the trades in high school by portraying the skilled trades as a career option equal to college or university.²⁸



²⁸ N=41 Multiple responses were accepted for this answer.

Figure 11: Supports for Diverse Youth as identified by Youth Influencers

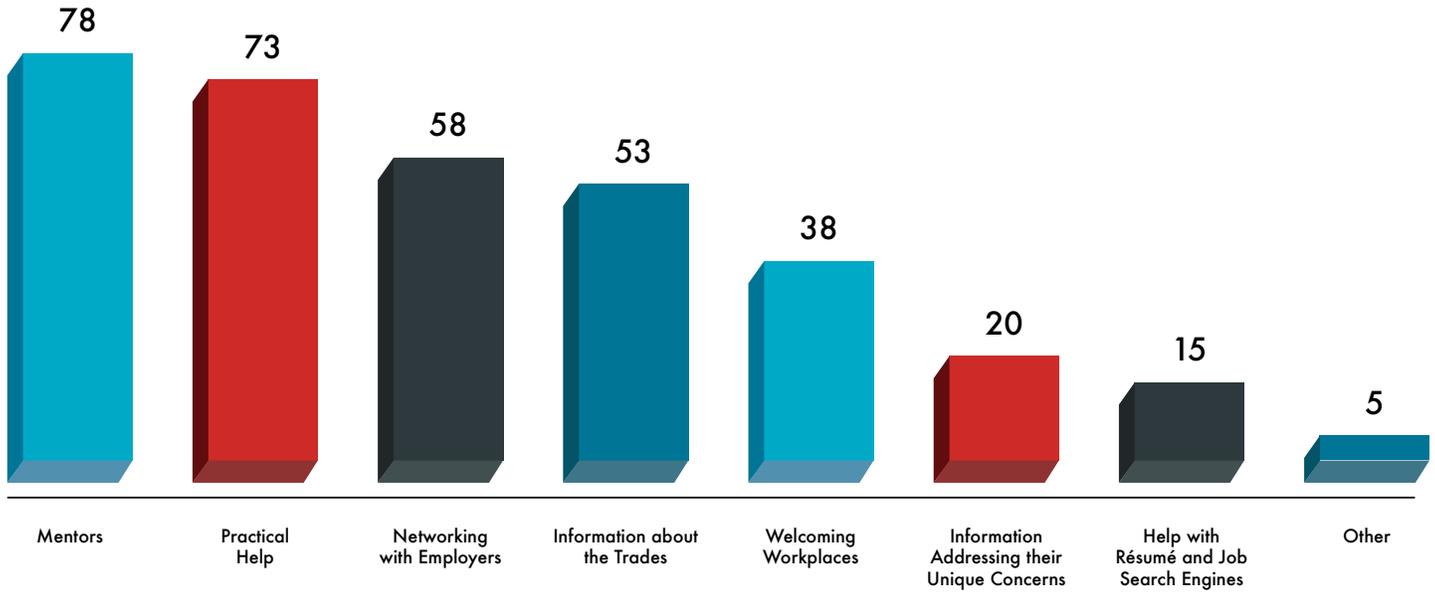


Figure 12: Strategies for Combatting Youth Unemployment



Engaging Youth: Input from the Apprenticeship Community

The ideas suggested by youth align with many of the suggestions by apprenticeship stakeholders (n=250), reinforcing their relevancy when devising future youth skilled trades engagement strategies:²⁹

Create Awareness about Skilled Trades Careers

- Provide information to youth, parents and guidance counsellors. Engage these groups as early as elementary school
- Give specialized career advice to potential apprentices as the pathway is unique among post-secondary options
- Encourage youth to take math courses beyond Grade 10
- Engage school superintendents as leaders and decision-makers. They can promote the trades throughout their districts and direct resources to shop classrooms
- Provide better equipment to high school shop classes
- Seek ways to address the disconnect between potential apprentice candidates and industry
- Teach youth and underrepresented groups to develop networks in the trades that will help them secure job opportunities

Promote the Importance of Soft Skills

- Along with strong technical skills, promote soft skills such as communication and team work

Engage Employers

- Encourage employer participation in youth apprenticeship programs
- Offer employers incentives to hire first- and second-year apprentices
- Inform employers about the supports and programs already available to them
- Help employers meet the workplace expectations of the younger generation
- Offer employers information sessions about their role in the apprenticeship system so they can better navigate the system

Promote High Quality Training

- Promote continuous learning so apprentices are safe and productive workers throughout their entire careers
- Ensure consistency in workplace training so apprentices develop all the necessary skills and competencies

Support Apprentice Progression and Completion

- Offer greater technical training flexibility to accommodate apprentices and employers
- Give journeyperson mentors more insights about how to effectively teach and train apprentices



²⁹ See CAF-FCA, Apprenticeship Supply and Demand Challenges Dialogue Findings Summary. (Ottawa: CAF-FCA, 2016).

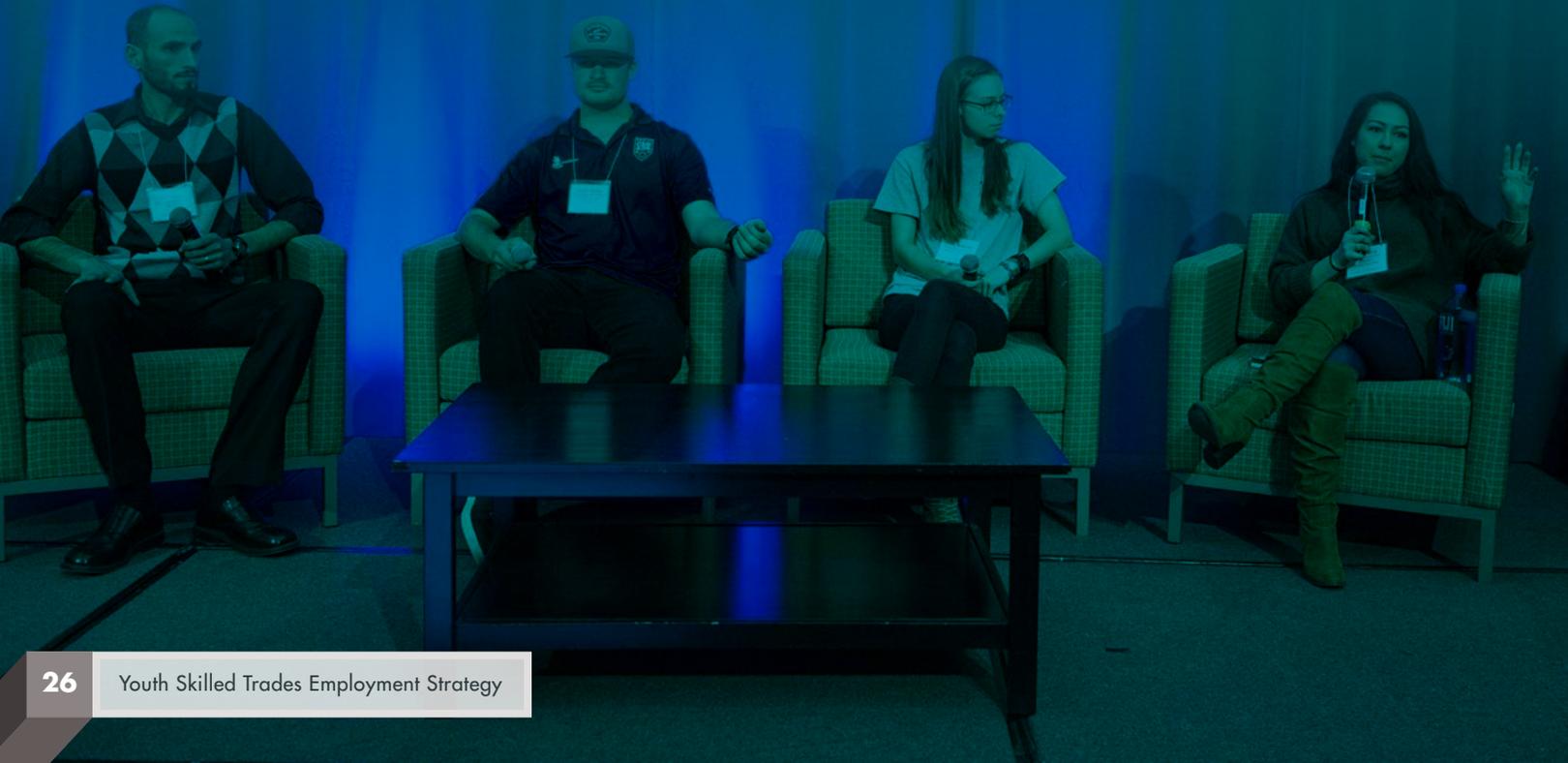
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Conclusion



At the four workshops hosted by CAF-FCA, youth learned apprenticeship is a viable alternative to university. The apprenticeship pathway offers an opportunity to gain practical skills and work experience while earning a wage and accumulating little to no debt. The work is rewarding because apprentices and journeypersons work together building communities. They complete complex and challenging projects, utilizing their problem-solving skills and the latest technologies. Apprentices and journeypersons can travel and meet new people on different projects. Youth were inspired by WorldSkills participants, highlighting the importance of youth sharing their experiences with one another.

Youth identified barriers preventing them from pursuing skilled trades careers. They lacked information about apprenticeship and were unsure about how to find the right trade for them. Youth worried about disappointing their family and friends who believe university is preferable as a post-secondary pathway. Youth were concerned about improving their math and science skills and paying for tools and tuition. They were uncertain about how to connect with an employer or career mentor.



Youth agreed they need employers willing to hire young people for apprenticeship and co-op positions. They would like more practical learning opportunities that align with the skills required on-the-job. Some youth suggested making co-op mandatory in high school so everyone can gain work experience. Young people see value in investments in public transportation so they can get to work without buying a car. Youth suggested that employers should be provided with tax incentives and wage subsidies that encourage them to hire youth with minimal experience.

Broad distribution of culturally-relevant career awareness materials, outreach to immigrant parents and the implementation of inclusive trades programming is required to integrate diverse youth into the skilled trades workforce. Sectors seeking diverse candidates need to ensure youth are aware of opportunity.

Youth proposed twelve strategies for combatting youth unemployment:

- create awareness about apprenticeship and careers in the skilled trades
- cultivate personal attributes for success in youth
- help youth develop a skilled trades résumé and practice their interview skills
- teach youth about networking, especially for immigrants who may be unfamiliar with Canadian workplace customs
- provide tools and equipment
- deliver safety training
- offer tutoring improving math and science skills
- educate youth about business and taking initiative
- facilitate connections between employers and youth
- provide accessible transportation
- offer mentoring
- support diverse youth

Workshop participants highlighted the importance of communication and youth outreach. Working in partnership with apprenticeship stakeholders across the country, CAF-FCA is committed to providing youth and high school teachers with resources and information about apprenticeship and the benefits of skilled trades careers. Featuring apprentices and journeypersons in videos on the Career in Trades website highlights individual success stories and provides youth with positive role models. CAF-FCA will continue to take a leadership role in disseminating career awareness and youth trades programming best practices across the country.

