

APPRENTICE AND SPONSOR SUPPORTS CONSULTATION SUMMARY

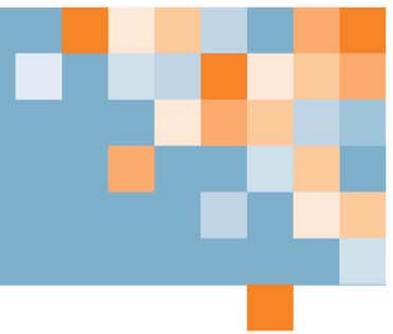


TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. PURPOSE	3
2. METHODOLOGY	3
Literature Review	3
Consultation Advisory Group	3
Multi-Stakeholder Meetings	3
Online Surveys	4
Webinars	4
Apprentice Lunches	4
Written Submissions	4
Analysis and Recommendations	4
Consultation Limitations	5
3. FINDINGS	5
3.1 Finding an employer / sponsor	6
3.2 Passing the final exam	7
3.3 Financial hardship	8
3.4 Knowledge of the BC Apprenticeship system	9
3.5 Sponsor Responsibilities	10
3.6 Math and Essential Skills	12
3.7 Employer incentives to train apprentices	13
3.8 Applicability of technical training	14
3.9 Access to technical training	15
3.10 Lack of incentive to complete	15
4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS	16

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present findings and recommendations from the Industry Training Authority (ITA) consultation exploring coaching supports that might best improve rates of continuation and completion of apprenticeships in British Columbia.

This consultation will inform the ITA's action plan to introduce up to fifteen regionally dispersed apprentice and sponsor coaches, and to improve on-line resources, as promised in the BC Skills and Training Plan. This work is supported by studies from Australia and elsewhere that suggest coaching supports contribute to improved completion rates.

2. METHODOLOGY

The consultation process was led by The Deliberation Network and focused on identifying gaps in apprentice and sponsor support that coaching supports might best address. The consultation was completed between January and March 2013.

Literature Review

The ITA completed a literature review into factors which impact continuation and completion rates, including key barriers and best practices to address these in other jurisdictions.

Consultation Advisory Group

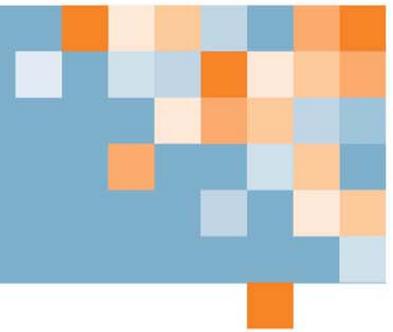
A multi-stakeholder Consultation Advisory Group was struck to help guide the consultation process and to provide oversight and ensure a thorough and balanced consultation was undertaken. The Advisory Group participated in a review of the initial consultation plan, monitored progress throughout the consultation and helped to form recommendations based on input from sponsors, apprentices, educators and other consultation participants interested in a healthy future for British Columbia's apprenticeship system.

Multi-Stakeholder Meetings

Multi-stakeholder meetings were held in seven communities around the province: Kelowna, Terrace, Cranbrook, Fort St. John, Prince George, Victoria and Burnaby. Approximately 350 people attended the multi-stakeholder meetings.

Meetings were open to the public, with a target audience of anyone interested in the apprenticeship training system. Consultation plan information and meeting invitations were published on the ITA website, and ITOs, training institutions and the Advisory Group were asked to issue third party invitations. In addition, ITA sent direct e-mail invitations to:

- All sponsors and apprentices in each city and all surrounding communities
- WorkBC Centres
- School Districts
- Labour Market Agreement (LMA) service providers
- First Nations contacts



The meeting format was similar in each community. After introductions and a short context briefing, participants reviewed a list of barriers in the four stages of an apprentice's journey: Registration, Work-Based Training, Technical Training and Completion/Certification. The list of barriers/obstacles was drawn from the literature review conducted by ITA staff. Participants were encouraged to identify additional barriers. Participants then voted on the barriers to:

- a) select the topic in each stage of the apprenticeship journey that they wished to discuss, and
- b) identify other barriers they considered to be of greatest significance

Solutions were identified in plenary and table discussions. In addition, participants were asked to use worksheets provided to share additional solutions and comments.

Online Surveys

Information about the Coaching Supports Consultation was posted on the ITA website, including three online surveys. Visitors interested in responding to the online survey were streamed into the most appropriate set of questions depending on whether they identified as an apprentice, a sponsor or another person interested in the apprenticeship system. Similarly to the multi-stakeholder meetings, the surveys focused on identifying barriers and solutions for each stage of the apprenticeship journey. At the suggestion of the Advisory Group, a prize was offered for registered apprentices completing the survey. Over 300 responses to the online survey were completed, including nearly 200 by apprentices.

Webinars

Three webinars were held in March. Two of these were focused on input from First Nations participants, and one was open to any interested participant from across the province. These one-hour discussions were also structured in a similar manner to the multi-stakeholder events, giving participants the opportunity to identify key barriers in each stage of apprenticeship and suggest coaching supports that might improve continuation and completion rates. Approximately 37 people attended.

Apprentice Lunches

Recognizing that few apprentices would likely be available to attend the morning multi-stakeholder meetings, luncheon discussions were held on the campus of six colleges across the province. These discussions were less formal in structure, instead focusing on identifying barriers and solutions in the work-based training and technical training stages of apprenticeship though all facets of apprenticeship did receive consideration. Time was also spent exploring the communication practices and preferences of apprentices. Approximately 265 apprentices attended a luncheon discussion.

Written Submissions

Three written submissions were also received, including submissions from the BC Building Trades, BC Road Builders and Heavy Construction Association and the Aboriginal Training and Employment Centre, Shuswap Nation.

Analysis and Recommendations

All consultation results were compiled and grouped by barrier. The initial list of barriers identified through the literature review was refined through the extensive input from the consultation. The Advisory Group reviewed the summary of barriers and common solutions presented and further grouped the findings into four recommended focus areas. These areas include actions coordinated by the ITA but delivered either by the coaches, by the ITA communications and customer service staff, or through work with partners.

Consultation Limitations

Although this consultation provided a range of input streams, from webinars, online surveys, apprentice luncheons and multi-stakeholder events, there are some important limitations that should be acknowledged.

Apprentice Luncheons were held on six college campus locations across British Columbia. Apprentices participating in these events were drawn from across a wide range of trades, and from different stages in their technical training. However, the mix of apprentices was not demographically representative of the total apprentice population, nor could they give comprehensive input on all technical training providers. These luncheon discussions were also limited to one hour, so discussion was narrowed to focus on the barriers to apprenticeship continuation and completion.

It was not possible within the scope of this consultation to specifically reach out to former sponsors, or people who started and subsequently suspended their apprenticeship. Similarly, the consultation did not explicitly set out to consult with recent apprenticeship completers. As a result, our feedback from the apprenticeship community was largely drawn from among active sponsors and those currently enrolled in active apprenticeships.

Multi-stakeholder events were held in seven locations across the province, and input varied across regions. While the attendance numbers were excellent, the mix of participants changed from city to city. The character of each meeting was influenced by this changing dynamic.

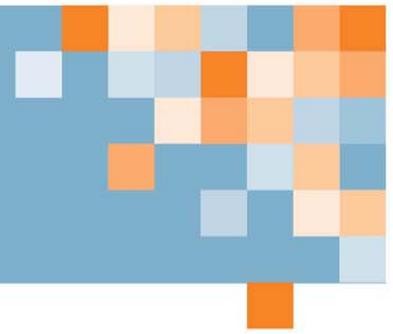
It is also important to note that multi-stakeholder events were morning events, typically from 8:15 to 11:00 a.m. Meeting evaluation forms completed by participants demonstrate a very high level of satisfaction with the event formats. It was a nearly unanimously held view that these meetings afforded an excellent opportunity to share views. However, there is a distinction to be made between a dialogue and a deliberation. It was not the ambition of this consultation to enlist participants in a lengthy deliberation of the challenges and potential solutions.

Finally, the consultations did not limit recommendations to functions of the Coaches which would be possible given current funding allocations, but rather discussed the barriers and potential solutions more broadly, looking also to opportunities to improve customer support and stakeholder service delivery.

Even with these important constraints, both the qualitative and quantitative feedback did harvest consistent themes and very constructive insights in initiatives that would promote the continuation and completion of apprenticeships.

3. FINDINGS

Throughout the consultation, participants reported that frustration among apprentices seems to be widespread and ongoing throughout the apprenticeship journey, yet there was no clear place for feedback or help. Sponsors also expressed concern with the lack of information they receive about their roles and responsibilities. Therefore, the support for additional guidance for both apprentices and sponsors was almost universal. Participants cautioned that the nature of additional supports should be flexible enough to accommodate changes in economic health of a region.



Ten barriers were identified, which are discussed in detail in the following sections (in order of priority):

1. Finding a sponsor
2. Passing exams
3. Financial hardship
4. Knowledge of the BC apprenticeship system
5. Sponsor responsibilities
6. Math and Essential Skills
7. Employer incentives to train apprentices
8. Applicability of technical training
9. Access to technical training
10. Apprentice incentives to complete

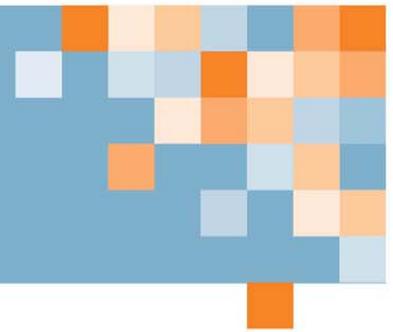
3.1 Finding an employer / sponsor

Through the multi-stakeholder consultations this was identified as the top barrier facing apprentices. This echoes findings from focus groups with apprentices and sponsors conducted in 2011 by the ITA which found that a key barrier in pre-registration was finding an employer, particularly for Level 1 and 2 apprentices. One in three current apprentices (35%) reported finding the first sponsor at the beginning of the apprenticeship was difficult or very difficult, and 25% reported it was difficult or very difficult finding work as an apprentice during the course of the apprenticeship. Almost two-thirds of other stakeholders surveyed (59%) reported that this was difficult or very difficult. The difference in the ratings may reflect sampling, as those who were interested in the trades but unable to secure an apprenticeship were not included in the consultation. Some noted the distinct challenge of finding a ticketed supervisor.

Some consultation participants suggested addressing this issue through existing partnerships such as those between training providers and industry groups. They also suggested leveraging existing employment resources such as job fairs to promote trades jobs. Others suggested interventions to provide potential apprentices with better job hunting skills, and to ensure students graduating high school have the skills employers require (both essential skills and soft skills).

Marketing programs aimed at potential sponsors and apprentices were also proposed, including highlighting the benefits of apprenticeship and certification to both sponsors and apprentices. This marketing could be completed by coaches working to develop relationships with employers.

A common proposal was the development of a central registry of sponsors, including the scope of trade available, status as a past or current sponsor, and region. There could also be a database of potential apprentices to assist apprentice recruitment by potential sponsors. While some suggested this as a role for the ITA, others presented it as an opportunity to build on existing resources such as STEP or the [British Columbia Construction Association's](#) Job Match, or as a function best served by association-driven trade schools. These services are more than simply a registry of information, but rather perform a matching function to proactively match apprentices and sponsors. Interestingly, Ontario is the only jurisdiction reviewed (Canadian provinces and Australia) that has a formal support in place to help would-be apprentices find an employer or sponsor.



A number of consultation participants discussed interventions to increase the number and quality of sponsors:

- Some suggested a structured education process to help employers understand the system and their obligations, possibly with an accreditation process at the end.
- Others suggested a mentorship program to provide guidance to interested potential apprentices.
- A subsidy for employers to 'trial' an apprentice was proposed, along with other financial subsidies such as an ongoing wage subsidy or a benefits co-operative. Employers noted a desire to trial apprentices before taking them on for long contracts. At the same time, some participants suggested that if employers had the ability to secure commitments from the apprentice that they would return to their employer, more employers would be willing to take on first or second level apprentices.
- Several participants noted the challenge for small employers to take on apprentices and noted that HR supports or simplifying the process could assist.

Some participants suggested that sponsoring an apprentice be required or that employers not using apprentices be penalized. The provincial government might be able to require apprentices on any publicly-funded projects or those which use foreign workers. Encouraging sharing apprentices among employers was also proposed as an intervention to address the issue.

The consultation participants described the role of the coaches as on the ground across the province. Coaches might help screen potential applicants, improve the feedback loop from the ITA, and focus energy on ensuring employers are aware of their responsibilities as many of the problems are likely due to insufficient information.

Summary:

- **Market value of certification**
- **Build on existing relationships to connect to employers**
- **Central registry of past and current sponsors**
- **Job Match system linking sponsors and apprentices**
- **Coaches need to be on the ground across the province**

3.2 Passing the final exam

One in four apprentices or other stakeholders reported that passing the certification exam is difficult or very difficult. Apprentices noted that when failing a final exam there is no information available as to which areas they did not pass or advice on remedial training.

Some participants suggested that the Coaches might work with apprentices to prepare them to write exams, or help them to interpret their exam results to understand where they fell short. Others suggested better exam outcomes could be achieved by helping to connect apprentices to exam preparation materials, or to ensure that exam results identified gaps and target areas for improvement. It was also noted that apprentices may struggle on the exams if they have not had enough exposure

to the trade, and that interventions to improve work based training may also improve exam outcomes.

Some suggested changes needed to be made to the exams themselves: giving more flexibility to a passing grade, revising the questions to be more straightforward, allowing re-challenges, or ensuring that the exam language and curriculum are more in sync. Others noted the difficulties some apprentices face writing a multiple choice exam, including those with learning disabilities. They proposed alternate forms of assessment, including more testing of practical knowledge. Finally, some suggested the timing of exams.

Summary:

- **Improve information on exam results – make gaps clearer and advise on remedial training**
- **Historical coach role in preparing apprentices to write exams**
- **Correct disconnect between exam language and curriculum language**
- **Build in practical component or alternate assessment process**
- **Explore alternate assessment for people with learning disabilities**

3.3 Financial hardship

The central financial hardship issue raised by apprentices after losing a sponsor during the course of an apprenticeship was the shortage of hours or low hourly wages. Several apprentices noted problems where their wages did not increase as they progressed towards certification. One in four apprentices surveyed (25%) reported problems in finding work during their apprenticeship and one in five apprentices (19%) reported that the lack of work-based hours delayed completion. Some noted that the Employer Insurance (EI) process after loss of work can be six to eight weeks, which creates a “second system of turmoil” for clients. Participants perceived that a common response to these problems was either abandoning the apprenticeship process or moving to Alberta.

In some trades, the cost of tools can also be prohibitive. Participants in several communities proposed an apprentice-sharing model for companies who can’t support a full-time/year-round apprentice, possibly supported by an apprentice-sharing job registry. Others suggested a wage subsidy program for sponsors would result in more consistent and better employment for apprentices.

Others noted the difficulty experienced by apprentices in planning financially for the training period. Many suggested financial planning training or encouraging employers to hold back a percentage of wages to be released to apprentice during training periods. Others proposed interventions in the scheduling of training, the creation of employer/union-sponsored bursaries.

Finally, some noted that EI delays are a significant issue for apprentices, and interventions to help navigate EI and improve EI support during the training period would be most helpful. If changes to EI processes are not possible, some form of support to bridge the first two weeks of training would be very useful.

"The inconsistency of work is the biggest difficulty for me. Starting as an apprentice electrician was a career change for me and I have been considering going back to my previous career because of being laid off and the low apprentice wages."

- Apprentice Survey Participant

Summary:

- Advocate for fix to EI system; help apprentices navigate EI; harmonize training registration with EI application
- Financial literacy: educate apprentices on the costs of school and the EI process; on the need to save; tax credits and bursaries
- Promote the creation of a savings plan for apprentices during work
- Educate sponsors on expectation for compensation to increase throughout apprenticeship
- Shortage of hours, cost of tools, low entry level wages can threaten continuation
- WorkBC financial support process can be 6-8 weeks

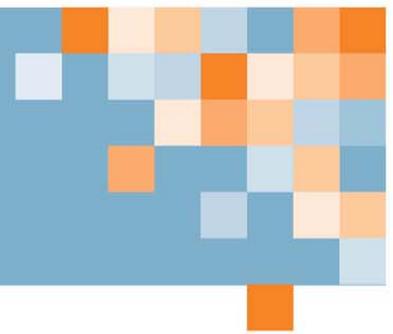
3.4 Knowledge of the BC Apprenticeship system

In 2011, the ITA conducted focus groups with apprentices and sponsors and found a key barrier in pre-registration was insufficient awareness and understanding of the apprenticeship system. This finding was echoed in this consultation. Apprentices commented on their own lack of information about the steps to access technical training and complete an apprenticeship, including how to access information and what paperwork needs to be completed. All stakeholders commented on the need for more information for employers about the roles and responsibilities involved in sponsoring apprentices.

A common tool identified for improvement was the ITA website. Some participants noted that the website is confusing to navigate, so information may be online but not found by apprentices or sponsors. Participants advocated better use of new technology, including the production of regionalized trade-specific videos, as well as print materials such as an employer handbook for every trade with simple checklists and clear flowlists. These improved communications should not be limited to information on the website, but should also include regular, structured contact with sponsors and apprentices to clarify their requirements at each stage of the apprenticeship. Overall, most participants felt improved support and materials was required for apprentices and sponsors.

Others proposed that trades information needs greater integration into the K-12 education system, noting that high school counselling departments are not always up to speed on the apprenticeship system. They proposed earlier exposure to the trades system, and the need to build a transition from high school to apprenticeships. This comment was also made more broadly across employment support systems, noting a need for counsellors who specialize in the trades.

Many suggested this as a key role for ITA coaches, who could act as an advisor and point of contact for apprentices and sponsors. Coaches could encourage more sponsors and talk with employers about the value of apprenticeship, as well as



help them understand what to expect from the apprentice at each level. Coaches could also work with apprentices to motivate them to complete certification and help them understand what steps are required on their part. These participant recommendations are in line with the 2011 Canadian Apprenticeship Forum report *Investigating Apprenticeship Completion in Canada*, which suggested that better communicating apprenticeship requirements before registration would increase completion rates. Many other Canadian jurisdictions have a counselling function for apprentices and sponsors.

Improved information to assist with navigating the apprenticeship system is needed throughout the apprenticeship, from registration to completion. Participants suggested this type of information could be integrated into technical training and provided as part of an exit package for newly certified journeypersons e.g. how to sponsor and mentor.

Don't have a detailed and complete process for us to look at before registering. I needed to apply for EI for while I was in school. When I got my application ready I was notified that I needed a specific code to apply for EI which I should have been given after registration, before going to school. I spent a lot of time to get this fixed.

- Apprentice Survey Participant

[There is a] lack of general information of the process and in getting direct answers to questions. Often we speak with individuals who get different answers from Customer Service, depending on who they speak with.

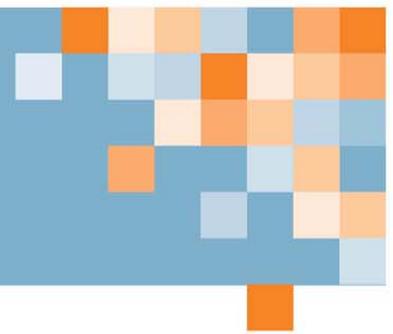
- Sponsor Survey Participant

Summary:

- Offer trade-specific information
- Provide guidance on roles and responsibilities for both apprentices and sponsors
- Improve ITA website info for apprentices
- Create print materials for employers
- Communicate regularly with apprentices and sponsors
- Integrate apprenticeship system information into existing career and employment supports

3.5 Sponsor Responsibilities

In 2011, the ITA conducted focus groups with apprentices and sponsors and found that key post-registration barriers included work-based training standards, mediating work-based issues and reporting of hours. Similarly, the 2011 Canadian Apprenticeship Forum report *Investigating Apprenticeship Completion in Canada* found that limited exposure to full scope of the trade and the workplace's lack of a mentoring culture were key issues. These earlier findings were echoed during this consultation. During the apprentice luncheons it was typically the case to hear that many, or even most, apprentices were not being given access to the full range of available work-site learning opportunities. Overall, the majority of participating apprentices suggested their sponsors were simply not mindful of their obligation to provide scope of trade exposure to



apprentices. Many apprentices reported they were left largely unsupervised while on-site or cited instances where their requests to get 'off the broom' were denied.

The surveys found that the group most likely to express concern about apprentice's experience/exposure to all aspects of their trade was the other stakeholders (primarily training providers) at over half (55%). Apprentices (38%) and sponsors (19%) were less likely to report this as an issue.

Consultation participants suggested that sponsors and apprentices would both benefit from a checklist of expected scope of trade apprentices should be practicing at each training level. These would provide apprentices and sponsors with information to reduce concerns that work-based training is not providing full scope of trade. Apprentices also need to know what to expect at work based training. Logbook tracking would assist apprentices and sponsors documenting ITA learning outcome achievement.

Many participants also suggested that sponsors would benefit from supports such as a sponsor manual, sponsor training and mentorship supports. Sponsor training might include how to use Direct Access, track with a logbook, submit final hours and sign-off and offer a welcoming environment for women and Aboriginal apprentices. Mentorship supports could provide guidance on how to make time for mentoring as well as a code of conduct between employers and apprentices. Some suggest mentors could be certified through a formal mentorship training program.

Some employers raised concerns about apprentice work habits or skills. Participants suggested technical training and sample employer / apprentice agreements could be used to reinforce employer expectations, but noted that Coaches could also help in this regard.

Participants noted the need for supports to assist apprentices and sponsors address disputes. A number of apprentices were concerned about the challenge of gaining a final sign-off from employers for hours worked and not reported. In both the apprentice and sponsor survey getting sign-off from supervisor was identified as difficult or very difficult by one in ten respondents. One participant noted that some sponsors do not want to sign off for certification because they feel the apprentice will leave. Participants most commonly recommended that Coaches assist in these instances, though some also felt tools to support apprentice/employer conversations would reduce the need for Coaches.

"[I have] not been given the chance to implement the training I received from college in the workshop. Just kept being asked to do basic low level work. Sponsor never has time to show/train properly."

- Apprentice Survey Participant

"I believe it would be helpful to have an electronic sign off procedure, instead of all of the faxing and scanning that currently has to happen. It definitely slows down the process."

- Sponsor Survey Participant

"Employers utilize the sign-off as leverage against the apprentice. They can keep them at a lower pay rate longer. It forces the apprentice to either comply or look for work elsewhere"

- Other Stakeholder Survey Participant

Summary:

- Ensure apprentices receive sufficient work-based exposure to all aspects of the trade
- Provide supervising journey person with trade-specific checklist of scope at each level
- Train sponsors and provide with a guide including:
 - how to make time for mentoring
 - code of conduct between employers and apprentices
 - offer a welcoming environment for women and Aboriginal apprentices
 - how to use Direct Access
 - track with a logbook
 - submit final hours and sign-off
- Help apprentices understand what they need to learn during work based training

3.6 Math and Essential Skills

Apprentices (17%) and other stakeholders (37%) both reported that lack of necessary math skills could be difficult or very difficult for apprentices trying to complete their apprenticeship. Consultation participants noted that many apprentices lack the math and other Essential Skills required for their trade. They proposed a range of intervention opportunities, starting in the K-12 system and ranging to Coach services to address sponsor, trainer or apprentice identified Essential Skills deficiency.

Some participants felt that a key intervention point was in the K-12 system, further integrating trades with the education system and curriculum, for example, through applied math courses. They noted perceptions that in particular, many Aboriginal youth are coming out of high school ill-prepared for trades training due to a lack of Essential Skills. Some participants recommended the development of Aboriginal trades prep programs which would cover Essential Skills.

Given the lack of Essential Skills coming out of high school for some students, participants proposed mandatory pre-requisite courses, or an English assessment at the start of apprenticeship for those with English as a second language. Manitoba has instituted a model with a recommended grade requirement for each trade.

Others felt that a good intervention point was within technical training, recommending an increased focus on math and Essential Skills in level one and throughout technical training. Rather than viewing Essential Skills as part of the preparation for training, some suggested the ITA should check in on Essential Skills throughout the program. Others suggested that the provision of math tutors at the College has been successful and could be expanded.

Coaches or sponsors might also help apprentices to identify math deficiencies and encourage them to access existing math supports. Though the ITA has an online, trade-specific Essential Skills assessment, apprentices may have difficulty finding the service. Consultation participants noted that older workers may, in particular, have difficulty navigating the website to access these supports.

Summary:

- Apprentices needing help with math and Essential Skills do not know about existing ITA supports
 - Check in on Essential Skills throughout apprenticeship
 - Trades preparation in high schools needs to be strengthened – prep for trades, Essential Skills awareness
- Strengthen math and Essential Skills in Level 1 / Foundation technical training
- Recommendation for pre-requisites added to BC program profiles e.g. Manitoba model with recommended grade requirement for each trade

3.7 Employer incentives to train apprentices

Participants noted a perception that the number of sponsors is dropping, and proposed that direct engagement with employers encouraging them to sponsor apprentices. Participants recommended promoting the value of apprenticeship, such as building loyalty with employees, increasing their understanding of your business, and ensuring you have skilled workers for the future. Some felt the Coaches would be well positioned to do this work: engaging employers and dispelling myths about the cost of apprentices, instead outlining the likely return on investment.

Participants also acknowledged the cost of training apprentices, particularly for small or medium sized businesses, which make up the majority of trades employers in BC. One in five sponsors surveyed reported a shortage of journey person supervision for apprentices (18%) or insufficient time and resources to train apprentices (20%). Apprentices observed that employers were concerned at the efficiency and cost of time spent mentoring apprentices, and that on a busy work-site even a willing mentor might be too busy to help out. As a result, participants felt that many sponsors do not provide quality mentorship, or are simply reluctant to take on apprentices at all. Some suggested that larger businesses could have a trained mentor in place to support multiple apprentices, or that the ITA could provide training for employers to strengthen their mentorship skills when acting as sponsors.

Some participants noted the challenge for sponsors who train first and second year apprentices, only to have them poached by other employers as they become more productive, and recommended an intervention to require or incent apprentices to stay with employers who train them. Others suggested legislated wage scales would reduce poaching.

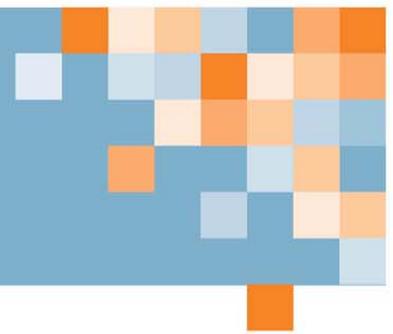
Some participants did propose incentives for employers to train apprentices such as wage subsidies (in addition to existing tax credits), or other support targeted to small and medium sized businesses without internal Human Resources. One example of this support might be the Coaches, who could provide on-site support for sponsors and intervene with apprentices as necessary. Others suggested that the BC government require trades businesses completing provincial contracts to sponsor apprentices. Several noted that a balance should be found between regulation and incentives.

“I resigned from my employment because my employer was not fulfilling his duties as a sponsor. I was never registered as an apprentice.”

- Apprentice Survey Participant

“Long term commitment from employers to apprentices is needed. Ability to share (employ elsewhere) apprentices should be promoted.”

- Sponsor Survey Participant



Summary:

- 1 in 5 sponsors surveyed reported insufficient time and resources to train apprentices.
- Promote value of apprenticeship: directly engage with employers encouraging them to sponsor
- Require or incent apprentices to stay with employers who train them
- Support shared sponsorship options
- Legislate wage scales to address poaching
- Wage subsidies to train apprentices

3.8 Applicability of technical training

One of the most common concerns expressed by apprentices during the consultation was the misalignment of technical training with workplace realities. Apprentices reported sometimes being required to learn material that is out of date or out of practice, and then required to pass exams on this same material. Apprentices are frustrated because they feel there is no effective feedback loop to improve matters. One in five sponsors surveyed also reported that technical training quality issues presented a difficult or very difficult challenge for sponsors. Some participants noted that when apprentices are not getting work-based hours covering scope of trade, course materials become even more important.

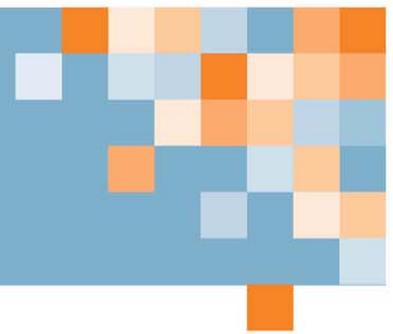
It should be noted that the consultation methodology did not allow for apprentices from all training providers to be consulted through apprentice luncheons or multi-stakeholder meetings, so concerns about technical training issues may not be system wide. However, these reports echoed the 2011 findings from focus groups with apprentices and sponsors, who noted that key barriers in post-registration issues included length and relevance of technical training and study resources.

Consultation participants suggested a province-wide review of in-school training (including curriculum and textbooks) for field relevancy and currency. Some consultation participants felt that a key issue was not the technical training itself, but rather was due to a disconnect between the program outline, the curriculum and the exams.

Coaches were suggested as a potential support in receiving these concerns and initiating system-wide action to address them. Apprentices or sponsors could approach Coaches with concerns about quality of technical training, who could refer the issue to the appropriate ITA Director to address.

Summary:

- Apprentices report being required to learn material that is not current or field relevant, and then required to pass exams on this same material.
- Apprentices sometimes perceive that training does not prepare them for exams.
- When apprentices don't get work-based hours covering scope of trade, course materials become even more important.
- Apprentices perceive no effective feedback loop to improve technical training



3.9 Access to technical training

Access to technical training was discussed both as an issue of the regional and scheduling availability of training, and as a challenge for sponsors to release apprentices for block training. One in four apprentices (26%) surveyed and one in three other stakeholders (35%) reported that the availability of technical training was difficult or very difficult for apprentices.

For apprentices living outside the Lower Mainland, access to needed course work can involve long waitlists and high travel costs. Consultation participants called for more local training options, suggesting a rotation of training locations by bringing in instructors. Local training facilities could be enhanced to allow use as a training stage for many trades. Additional funding might be required for training in remote areas to accommodate smaller class sizes.

In addition to requesting more geographic consistency in training availability, consultation participants also asked for more flexibility in the training delivery and schedules. Participants suggested the ITA and training providers explore online training, part time training in concert with work hours or on-site training. Some suggested that improved communications with apprentices about existing training options would help considerably.

One in five sponsors reported that releasing apprentices for block training was difficult or very difficult. Some participants suggested it would be easier if training could be scheduled ahead of time, with sponsors committing to release apprentices, apprentices committing to attending, and training providers to offering it. This model may be more viable for larger employers.

“Depending on the time of year, sending apprentices away can be challenging. The timing for the most part is good, and it must be a challenge for the colleges to make a schedule that works for everyone.”

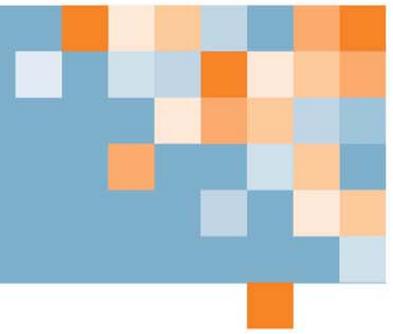
- Sponsor Survey Participant

Summary:

- Some employers struggle to release employees for block training
- Encourage pre-approved training plan, based on better understanding of training options and schedules
- Accessing all 4 levels of training in rural and remote areas challenging:
 - explore flexible training
 - create local “training stages” or facilities that could be used for many trades
 - rotate training locations
 - in-house technical training
 - online training

3.10 Lack of incentive to complete

Consultation participants noted that the lack of incentives for apprentices to complete may be an issue – when faced with barriers, apprentices feel certification is not worth the challenge. Many employers do not encourage certification, though they may support partial training. Once apprentices have reached level three, their pay may not immediately increase with certification.



The most common suggestion to address this issue within the BC apprenticeship system was to have Coaches do direct follow up with discontinuers in the last or second last year of their program. Participants asked for the ITA to promote the long-term financial benefits of certification. They suggested working with stakeholders to explore completion bursaries, and the development of a recognition program for achievers and supporters. Finally, participants recommended setting up the expectation to complete by connecting apprentices with the National Occupational Analysis and the Red Seal in Year One, and revisit it at every level and every year.

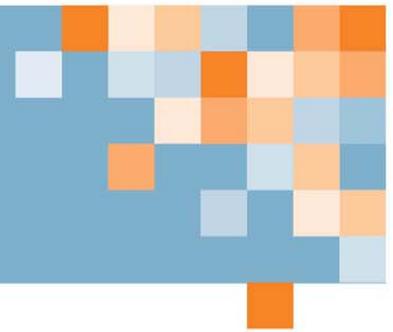
Summary:

- Direct follow up and encouragement to complete for long term continuers / discontinuers
- Promote value of apprenticeship; long term financial benefits
- Encourage compensation increase as levels progress
- Explore bursary for completion

4. RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

The Advisory Group met at the close of the consultation to review the key findings and begin to form recommendations for action. Four focus areas were identified to address the ten key barriers:

1. Building knowledge of the BC apprenticeship system
 - Provide information on how to engage in and navigate the system
 - Inform key roles and responsibilities for sponsors and apprentices
2. Advising apprentices and sponsors
 - Support and promote excellence in mentorship
 - Point of contact for referral and advice to sponsors and apprentices to address issues
3. Boosting apprentice success
 - Provide support to apprentices to address barriers to continuation and completion
 - Continue strengthening training delivery to ensure field relevance and currency.
4. Supporting apprentice and sponsor connections
 - Leverage and support expansion of existing matching tools for use in BC
 - Build capacity with employers to take on apprentices



The table below shows how these focus areas relate to the key barriers.

	Knowledge of the BC apprenticeship system	Incentives to train apprentices	Finding Sponsors	Sponsor Responsibilities	Financial Hardship	Access to Technical Training	Applicability of Technical Training	Math and Essential Skills	Passing Exams	Apprentice Incentives to Complete
Building knowledge of the BC apprenticeship system	•			•	•	•				
Advising apprentices and sponsors				•	•	•				
Boosting apprentice success						•	•	•	•	•
Supporting apprentice and sponsor connections		•	•							

The results from this consultation will inform the development of a multi-year Action Plan for the ITA to introduce supports for continuation and completion through the identified focus areas.