

Final Report

Kenora Apprenticeship Forum



Northwest Training and Adjustment Board
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Methodology

Community consultations, usually conducted as Apprenticeship Forums, were the process by which we identified apprenticeship issues in the communities and engaged apprenticeship stakeholders and employers in discussions about solutions. We consulted with apprenticeship service providers to create Local Planning Committees. These committees helped identify the issues, shape the agenda, recruit employers, deliver the Apprenticeship Forum, and implement follow-up activities.

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Every community has organizations that deliver services to support apprenticeship. Workforce Planning Boards gather intelligence about the supply of labour and the demand side of the local labour market by working with employers to identify and meet their current and emerging skills needs¹. Employment Ontario (EO) employment services connect people looking for work with employers looking for workers. They also manage the Canada Ontario Jobs Grant funds for employers with less than 25 employees. Every community with which we consulted is represented by Aboriginal Employment Service providers. Funding flows from the Aboriginal Skills Employment Training Strategy (ASETS). Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) is another EO service coordinated through regional Literacy Networks. Apprenticeship registration is administered by the local Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities (MTCU). Employment Training Consultants (ETCs) contract apprentices and employers to Registered Training Agreements. Local Community Colleges deliver LBS and Academic Upgrading including face-to-face and online delivery of Academic and Career Entrance (ACE). Community colleges also deliver in school apprenticeship training,² co-op apprenticeship diploma programs, and pre-apprenticeship programs. Union sponsored trainers hire apprentices into the union, thus providing apprentices with a wide scope of work opportunities and trade practice. Some union trainers provide in school training. Secondary schools offer co-op programs in grade 11 and 12 including the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP). Community Economic Development Offices and Chambers of Commerce have important roles promoting apprenticeship. Finally, we found interest from private sector manpower services in becoming apprentices' employer sponsors.

The first step in the community consultation was recruiting key apprenticeship stakeholders to form Local Planning Committees to ensure that consultations were tailored to the specific apprenticeship needs of the community. The Committees determined the need for a consultation and what form it would take (focus group, apprenticeship forum). They also proposed dates and locations.

The Forum was targeted at employers who are reluctant to hire apprentices. We also targeted employers who are having success with apprenticeship. Local Planning Committees were the key to recruiting these employers.

¹ Workforce Planning Ontario (<http://www.workforceplanningontario.ca/>)

² Community Colleges deliver about 90% of the in school training for apprentices.

We identified community contacts and organizations with strong employer networks. We asked them to reach out to employers through their professional networks. Typical organizations included employment service providers, literacy networks, Chambers of Commerce, community college advisory committees, community trainers, and apprenticeship offices, and local employer associations.

Community recruiting for the Forums was done using Survey Monkey. This not only allowed us to track the number of registrations and identify who was attending. We asked registrants to identify as Apprenticeship Service Providers or Employer Representatives. Employers were asked about the trade sector they represented and their type of organization. All registrants were asked about their expectations for the Forum, including whether they were willing to participate in follow-up initiatives.

The registration information gave us advance information about the Forum audience; as a result, we were often able to engage employers informally in conversation about their apprenticeship issues and encourage them to get involved in community based solutions.

A Summary of Apprenticeship Forum Registrations is included as table [A].

The agenda was shaped by the Local Planning Group. A key design feature was keeping the Forum to a half-day session. Employers are busy people. We wanted to respect their time. Our Forum was held in the evening with supper included.

The Forum Agenda included a panel presentation and roundtable discussions. Each Forum included an overview of employers concerns with apprenticeship and a presentation by the local Employment Training Consultant (ETC) who outlined the most recent information about apprenticeship, especially in the new environment of the Ontario College of Trades. Panelists were asked to describe what they do to serve apprenticeship and to identify issues that either restrict or promote access to apprenticeship. Roundtable discussions were designed around a specific task. Every table included employers and apprenticeship service providers.

Facilitators asked for Roundtable participants to introduce themselves including their work with apprentices. An employer issue was identified and participants were asked to describe what the community needs to have in place to solve the issue. They then explored who needs to be involved and how. The Roundtables concluded by asking participants what they need to do to make this happen after the Forum is over.

Table [A] is a participant profile summary.

Table [A]

Field Research to Increase Support for Hiring Apprentices and Supporting Apprentices' Completion												
Summary of Apprenticeship Forum Registrations												
		Participants			Trade Sector				Type of Organization			
		Total	Apprenticeship Service Providers	Employer Representatives	Construction	Industrial / Manufacturing	Motive Power	Service	Large Employer	Unionized Small or Medium Sized Employer	Non-Unionized Small or Medium Sized Employer	Labour Sponsored Organization
Kenora	27-Jan-15	43	29	14	9	2	3	4	3	0	10	0
(Percentage)		100%	67%	33%	64%	14%	21%	29%	21%	0%	71%	0%

Kenora Apprenticeship Forum (January 27, 2015)

Seven Generations Education Institute hosted the Kenora Apprenticeship Forum.

The Districts have large indigenous populations. Shooniyaa Wa Biitong provides employment services; Seven Generations Education Institute provides a wide selection of training.

Employment Ontario service providers, located throughout the Districts, provide employment and literacy services.

The Kenora/Rainy River Districts are experiencing modest economic activity from developments in the mining industry. The population is decreasing and the median age (40.9) is younger than in Ontario. The Districts are seeing net outmigration. Compared to Ontario, the percentage of the population with less than postsecondary is higher than Ontario. Fewer youth under the age of 24 participate in the labour force and there is a greater unemployment rate.

The Project Coordinator and the Executive Director, Literacy Northwest attended a Northwest Training and Adjustment Board (NTAB) community consultation September 30, 2014. The consultation was timely, as it provided an opportunity to meet many of the apprenticeship stakeholders and to tell them about this project.

NTAB makes an interesting case for transitioning workers from surplus to demand occupations by identifying job skills that are transferable across occupations and bridging the skills gap through training.

The Apprenticeship Forum attracted 43 participants. 14 were apprenticeship employers.

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Construction (64%; N = 9) represented the largest proportion of employers followed by service (29%; N = 4), motive power/transportation (21%; N = 3) and Industrial/Manufacturing (14%; N = 2)³.

The employer organizations are best described as nonunionized small or medium-size employers (71%; N = 10) and large employer (21%; N = 3).

Pre-Forum registration themes

Participants were asked about their expectations for the Forum. Twelve (12) responses were received.

Apprenticeship policies

- Ontario College of Trades and changes to restrictive ratio requirements (e.g., Carpenter to go from 1:1 to 2:1)
- employers need better understanding of the Ontario College of Trades and membership requirements

Gathering information about apprenticeship

- connections with employers including a registry of employers who take on apprentices
- identifying local opportunities for aspiring apprentices.
- solutions to help young people work through the apprenticeship path and become journey-persons
- visualize possible pathways/options for clients to follow regardless of where they access Employment Ontario services

Promoting trades and apprenticeship

- more information about how to develop and promote apprenticeships
- sharing success stories (employer sponsors, OYAP)

³ The total number of responses does not equal the number of apprenticeship employers as multiple responses were received.

Literacy, essential skills and employment readiness

- better understanding of the many service providers throughout the Northwestern Ontario region
- encourage more coordination of services to benefit local employers and clients
- better awareness of how LBS agencies can assist apprentices including support services for apprentices prior to attending Trade school - assistance with writing test, test anxiety, etc.
- best practices for apprenticeship completions

Roundtable discussion themes

The Roundtable discussions brought apprenticeship service providers and employers together to discuss employers' apprenticeship issues. Roundtable participants (43) were asked to identify with an issue, explore the service providers' capacity to respond to the issues and propose strategies to resolve or overcome them.

Apprenticeship policies

The Ontario College of Trades (OCoT) is undergoing organizational review, so many of its mandated functions are on hold. This includes ratio reviews.

Questions were raised about ratios, particularly from small employers in the construction trades. Ratios in the compulsory trades (i.e., construction electrician) are strictly enforced, but why are they also strictly enforced in the voluntary trades (i.e., carpenter)? Why does carpentry have as strict a ratio requirement as construction electrician?

A local employer indicated that current ratios for carpentry restrict him to hiring and training one apprentice every eight years. In that same time, with a 1:1 ratio, he could hire and train six apprentices in eight years. With a 1:2 ratio (one journeyperson: two apprentices) he could train 16 apprentices in eight years.

Action

- Propose a pilot project to demonstrate that a uniquely Northern ratio is safe and effective.
- Request a waiver from OCoT. The request is led by the employer and supported by the community (i.e., Northwest Training and Adjustment Board, Chamber of Commerce, Community Economic Development Office, etc.).

Gathering information about apprenticeship

Employers are asking for more information about tax credits and incentives for apprenticeship. Can MTCU/Government provide bonuses for employers who retain

apprentices? Local businesses that hire and train apprentices need to bid on contracts in a level playing field (i.e., less than 10% difference in competing bids). Work needs to stay in town so that apprentices can be hired and trained.

Action

- Update the **Dollars and Sense** guide to financial incentives to reflect locally available information. Distribute it to all apprenticeship employers and post it on a central website.
- Lobby for competitive bidding to promote local employment.

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Hearing from employers

Some employers are having “pretty good success” because they insist on quality candidates. A problem arises when employers don’t have enough work.

Participants noted problems with training. Employees are difficult to retain when they don’t have easy access to in-school training, particularly if there are long waiting lists. Training correspondence should be emailed, not sent by “snail mail”. Participants also said that smaller communities need to have workers with multi-trade certification. Workers with one trade certification usually don’t have enough work in the community. Participants suggested creating certifications across similar trades that have similar core competencies. An example would be the plumbing and heating industry which uses plumbers, HVAC air conditioning, and sheet metal trades. Finally, access to training is sometimes difficult because of distance.

Action

- Establish a working group to consult with Confederation College to develop strategies for 1) creating better training schedules including the use of part-time, 2) developing multi-trade training and certification curriculum and 3) promoting better access and use of distance delivery models⁴ including the use of videoconferencing lessons.
- The working group has representation from OCoT, Confederation College, employers, journeypersons and EO service providers.

Promoting trades and apprenticeship

Participants noted a strong need to promote the trades and apprenticeship. They suggested “showcasing champion employers”, getting employers engaged in the schools, and building key partnerships with employers at the local level.

⁴ The College of the North Atlantic presented it's very successful level 3 HDEM distance delivery training at the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum Skilled Trades Summit, Ottawa, June 2014

Action

- Update the Dollars and Sense guide to financial incentives to reflect locally available information. Include examples of exemplary employers or best practices. Distribute it to all apprenticeship employers and post it on a central website.

Literacy, essential skills and employment readiness

Preparation for apprenticeship was clearly an issue with participants. It's important to identify literacy skills early and take steps to address training issues. Participants identified that persons with disabilities or weak literacy skills don't get identified until I've gone through the system or they're already at work. Integrated community services can do assessment, skill development, and employment readiness preparation (e.g., MTCU, LBS, employment services and school boards).

Action

- Create a visual pathway showing key partners and various points of entry and exit. This will help with consistent messaging to, from and among service providers.

Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) information

The Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) is a component of the secondary school co-op program offered in grade 11 and 12. The Ministry of Education is investing money into OYAP - a good thing, but it still remains difficult to find enough employers who are willing or able to take students.

OYAP should be a recruiting tool for employers because it is a low-cost, low risk way to assess a young person on the job. The OYAP placement students are insured through their schools, employers aren't required to abide by ratios, nor are they required to pay the student at the "apprenticeship" wage rate. For the young person, OYAP is an opportunity to "test the waters" of employment as an apprentice. Students can build hours towards their apprenticeship. Co-op coordinators screen students to ensure they are well prepared for the placement.

Participants noted issues including: transportation to employer sites, simplifying the OYAP agreement that rolls over to a Registered Training Agreement, and developing an exit plan for the transition from secondary school graduation to the employer. OYAP students need to be more aware of their OCoT responsibilities with the Registered Training Agreements.

Action

- Create an OYAP working group to promote the value of co-op and its potential for apprenticeship and employment. The working group should include representation from Employment Services who can help graduating students manage the transition from school to employment.



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