



WHAT NOW?

Blueprints for work-based learning



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Janet advises and informs research policies that will champion the development of a skilled and productive workforce able to meet the needs of the West's economy.

” The good news is that there are training programs specifically designed to help solve challenges faced by groups underrepresented in the workforce – and employers who face a shortage of qualified workers.

Across Canada, some industries – including advanced manufacturing, construction, and technology-based customer service – can't find enough qualified people to work in specific entry- to mid-level, skilled and semi-skilled jobs. People who fill these positions don't need to have university degrees and other post-secondary qualifications – but they do need to have some technical skills. And they need to be ready to work.

Meanwhile, almost 1.2 million Canadians are looking for jobs.¹ The people who are most likely to be unemployed are new immigrants, youth, Indigenous people and persons with disabilities. These groups, and women generally, also have lower workforce participation rates.²

One reason there aren't enough qualified candidates to match the job openings is that the usual programs that prepare people for employment don't adequately train people specifically for the good jobs that are available. They tend to offer generic programs designed to make people more employable. Participants – most often women, youth, Indigenous people and persons with disabilities – can end up no better off than they were before.³

Recommendation

There are a number of programs that are doing a good job preparing people who need jobs for the positions that are available. These programs are industry-led, demand-driven and based on competencies – that is, the things that people actually need to do. They help people find work or teach employees new skills (upskilling) by offering “hands-on” learning and certification. We recommend replicating and expanding these training programs for groups underrepresented in the workforce and offering additional supports for people who need them most.

WHAT NOW?

BLUEPRINTS FOR WORK-BASED LEARNING

The Situation

Many unemployed and underemployed Canadians can't find permanent, well-paying, skilled jobs – the kind of work that can help them grow their careers. Meanwhile, Canada needs more workplace-ready workers. The Governor of the Bank of Canada suggests that the economy would benefit from the participation in the workforce of another 500,000 people, mainly from those underrepresented groups.⁴

Employers in key sectors face skills shortages:

- Advanced manufacturing employers (e.g., aerospace and automotive parts suppliers) are implementing advanced production technologies (e.g., robotics, automation) and/or modern productivity improvement methods. They need to upskill current employees to realize the full productivity gains available and to continue to be globally competitive. In the advanced manufacturing sector, 40 per cent of employers face labour and skills shortages today and 60 per cent anticipate this will worsen over the next five years.⁵ These shortages are forecast to be close to 90,000 over the next five years.⁶
- Demographic shifts mean that the construction sector faces a loss of 21 per cent of its current workforce by 2026.⁷

However, traditional approaches to meeting the needs for skilled people in entry- to mid-level skilled jobs, by both industry and government, have not changed to meet these new realities.

Governments across the country spend billions of dollars to help people get trained and hired, but it doesn't always work out. For instance, in 2016, only 10 per cent of unemployed people served through one Ontario government program obtained quality, full-time employment that related to their training.⁸

Government agencies, non-profit organizations and training providers all work with unemployed and underemployed people to help them find entry- to mid-level skilled jobs. But training often includes only general help to search for jobs, not the job-specific, technical competencies that employers need. Training programs don't typically have strong connections with and specific understanding of business and industry firms and their entry- to mid-level job competency requirements. Programs may not offer needed social supports.

“ Manufacturing companies will often hire three trainees to get one that works out. Typical ratios in the hiring process are: 100 resumes reviewed: 10 people interviewed: 3 hires made: 1 successful employee. This is a costly process that draws resources from the employer and frustrates and disappoints candidates.

— Rod Jones, Managing Director, OMLC

Employers, especially small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), need training that prepares new and current employees to adapt to new technologies and modern productivity improvement methods.

To better prepare employees, training needs to:

- Meet job standards and learning outcomes defined by industry;
- Be competencies-based;
- Include experiential learning; and
- Validly and reliably assess learning.

The good news is that there are training programs specifically designed to help solve challenges faced by groups underrepresented in the workforce – and employers who face a shortage of qualified workers.

Three solutions that are working

ONTARIO MANUFACTURING LEARNING CONSORTIUM (OMLC)

omlc.ca

A group of manufacturers based in southern Ontario realized that they were all experiencing the same problems – a shortage of talent with the required skills, and a lack of good training programs – and they founded work-based learning programs themselves.

The model

OMLC works with companies that need entry-level employees with particular skills. Companies must be willing to invest the time and energy to train their own employees and are supported through the process by OMLC.

Recruitment

Youth, aged 18-29, are recruited through high schools, Manpower Group, other employment service providers and community partners. Applicants are tightly screened against non-technical competencies that determine success on the job. These competencies were defined by OMLC working with industry groups. Firms are only presented with candidates that have passed the OMLC standards.

WHAT NOW?

BLUEPRINTS FOR WORK-BASED LEARNING

Training

Employers determine the learning outcomes required for the training and curriculum is designed to meet the learning outcomes. Four weeks of initial training to get ready for work in manufacturing is provided by a private college. Trainees are hired early in the process and have a job to go to at the end of the four-week initial training.

On-the-job training is then provided over 22 weeks, in-house, by the employers. OMLC staff support the employers in coaching trainees to master all the required technical outcomes. Graduates are certified that they are competent to do the work they have been trained to do.

Funding

The Ontario government and participating companies support the program.

Results

Work-Based Learning programs developed and delivered in partnership with more than 45 advanced manufacturing companies in the aerospace, automotive and tool/die/mould sectors.

Over the last four and a half years, almost 500 young people have been trained and hired into permanent, well-paid entry-to mid-level skilled jobs.

Over 80 per cent success.

WOMEN BUILDING FUTURES

womenbuildingfutures.com

With its global headquarters in Edmonton, Women Building Futures (WBF) has been helping women turn their lives around for 20 years. WBF helps women with the interest, attitude and aptitude for the work to establish themselves in good careers.

WBF's model

WBF provides wraparound supports, including housing, to women who are unemployed or underemployed and offers pre-apprenticeship and equipment operator training for good quality careers in sectors that haven't traditionally employed a lot of women.

Recruitment

WBF informs women of the opportunities in construction and maintenance, skilled trades, transportation and heavy equipment operation as career options. Fit and readiness are determined by assessing essential skills and attitudes. Candidates are supported to meet readiness requirements. Drug and alcohol testing are part of assessment.

Training

WBF works in partnership with organizations in the construction, mining, transportation and oil and gas sectors to ensure that their curriculum is meeting the needs of employers. They make sure that their graduates have the basic skills, attitudes and aptitude to find and keep work with their partner employers.

Modular training includes hands-on skills training in a variety of trades; safety certifications; transportation; equipment operation; essential skills; financial literacy; and, physical fitness readiness.

Programs prepare women for career decision-making, job searches and interviews, and provide ongoing coaching and assistance with registration, education programs and completion of apprenticeships. WBF works to create a culture of sustained, inclusive change in the industries they serve.

Funding

WBF is funded by both industry and government.

Results

1500 women have completed training through WBF.

In 2017:

- 35 per cent of trainees identified as Indigenous; 48 Indigenous communities were actively engaged
- 95 per cent of graduates were employed in industry within six months of graduation
- 77 employers hired WBF graduates
- 157 per cent increase in earned income on the first day of work

NPOWER CANADA

NPowercanada.ca

NPower Canada prepares disadvantaged, underserved youth for work in IT-based jobs. NPower Canada offers 15 weeks of training and ensures that graduates are either employed or in post-secondary education six months after the training ends.

NPower Canada's model

Employer driven: Job training is geared to IT skills in demand by employers.

Holistic: Candidates are screened well, supported throughout and referred to other programs if NPower Canada is not a fit.

WHAT NOW?

BLUEPRINTS FOR WORK-BASED LEARNING

Comprehensive: The program includes recruitment, personal and technical training, paid internships, job placement, follow-up, and alumni services for up to five years.

Recruiting

Participants must be 18 to 29 years old and have completed high school, demonstrated financial need, have multiple barriers to employment and English language proficiency. NPower Canada taps its network including Employment Ontario programs, City of Toronto, Ontario Works, and referrals from school boards. Up to 40 per cent of recruits come from word-of-mouth by graduates.

Candidates undergo a three-stage process, including group and one-on-one interviews. If at any stage a candidate is screened out, they are referred to other programs.

Training

Training is provided for jobs in IT support services, digital customer care, programming, QA testing and project management.

An initial two-week boot camp prepares students for the 15-week classroom training and provides basic work skills, career exploration and life skills training. A standard core curriculum is supplemented by an individual program plan and project management and workplace simulation is embedded.

Each participant achieves at least one industry-recognized certification.

A licensed social worker is assigned to every class. Transitioning to full-time training can be difficult for people who have been marginalized, are living in poverty and may not have good family supports. Job placement supports, career management and mentorship last for five years beyond graduation.

Funding

The program has support from leading companies, various government programs and the United Way, among others.

Results

- 840 grads from the program.
- Job placement rates are 84 per cent.
- NPower Canada has grown from 87 participants in 2015 to 500 in 2018.
- Graduates are placed in jobs that pay \$16-24/hour to start, usually doubling their family's income.

Accenture has hired more than 60 NPower Canada grads since 2015.

“ We hire NPower Canada grads because they add great value to our organization ... A good thing to do has become a very valuable thing to do. NPower Canada youth are a high performing talent pool.

— **Stephen Gardiner**, Board Chair, and managing director, Accenture Digital

Conclusion

Industry, governments and agencies should continue to collaborate to offer workplace training programs designed to teach specific skills for available jobs. The highlighted programs lead to quality full-time employment for participants, often the first time they have work that provides well for their families. These examples offer blueprints for how training program funds can be used more effectively for everyone, especially for people who are less likely to be employed.

¹ Statistics Canada

² Statistics Canada

³ Office of the Auditor General of Ontario. 2016 Annual Report, Section 3.04

⁴ Poloz, Stephen. *Today's Labour Market and the Future of Work*, Remarks to Queen's University, March 2018

⁵ Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters. Management Issue Survey, 2016

⁶ Prism Economics and Analysis, 2015

⁷ BuildForce Canada, 2017

⁸ Office of the Auditor General of Ontario. 2016 Annual Report, Section 3.04

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