

# SKILLS<sup>4</sup>SUCCESS Initiative

## Engagement Report

June 2015



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## ACRONYMS

AHRC	Aboriginal Human Resource Council
ALBE	Adult Literacy and Basic Education
ATOC	Apprenticeship, Trades and Occupational Certification
ASETS	Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy
CanNor	Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency
CDO	Career Development Officer
CLC	Community Learning Centre
ECE	Department of Education, Culture and Employment
EDI	Early Development Initiative
EES	Education and Employment Supports
ERI	Education Renewal and Innovation
ESDC	Employment and Social Development Canada
GNWT	Government of the Northwest Territories
HR	Department of Human Resources
IM	Information management
IT	Information technology
ITI	Department of Industry, Tourism and Investment
K-12	Kindergarten to grade 12
LMI	Labour Market Information
MACA	Department of Municipal and Community Affairs
MTS	NWT Mine Training Society
NWT	Northwest Territories
PSE	Postsecondary Education
RR	Recruitment and Retention
SFA	Student Financial Assistance
SPSE	Skills and Postsecondary Education
S4S	Skills 4 Success

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) is leading the Skills 4 Success (S4S) Initiative to take a systematic look at adult and postsecondary education, and skills training programs, supports and pathways in the Northwest Territories (NWT). This work is being guided through the direction of a Steering Committee, the advice and recommendations of an Advisory Group, and the knowledge and expertise of four Working Group teams. The S4S Initiative was purposefully designed to be an inclusive process that gained early engagement from key stakeholders groups, and provided a number of opportunities for public input and feedback. Under the leadership of Minister Jackson Lafferty, ECE took the steps necessary to ensure that NWT residents had the opportunity to join the conversation to help shape skills training and postsecondary education strategies that align with labour market needs and demands in the NWT.

This Engagement Report provides an overview of the comments, ideas, and suggestions on the development of a 10-year strategic framework, and captures 'What We Heard' at the regional engagement sessions, S4S Symposium event, and through an online survey. In total, 163 people participated in 30 regional engagements sessions, 337 people completed the online survey, and 168 delegates attended the symposium event.

The stakeholder engagements were targeted towards students, educators/trainers, employers, job seekers/unemployed persons, employed persons, and those retired. The S4S Symposium participation was targeted towards Aboriginal governments and authorities, education and training providers, industry and business representatives, non-governmental organizations, professional associations, academics, students, apprentices, and engaged citizens.

Input and feedback has been compiled and synthesized under four topic areas as presented below:

1. Labour Market Information;
2. Education and Employment Supports;
3. Skills and Postsecondary Education; and,
4. Recruitment and Retention

The Tables below provides 'What We Heard' highlights from all three engagement platforms. To find further information on the S4S Initiative, please visit [www.skills4success.ca](http://www.skills4success.ca).

What We Heard – Highlights	
Labour Market Information	
Increase use, access and availability of LMI	▶ Develop single-window source
	▶ Increase availability of community level data
	▶ Ensure LMI data is easy to use, timely, and updated regularly
	▶ Target information to different end users (students, job seekers, employers, program planners, policy makers)
	▶ Utilize social media platforms
	▶ Increase LMI literacy so users know how to interpret, apply, and benefit from LMI
	▶ Provide short/medium/long term economic forecast to support business planning and hiring plans
Develop data collection mechanisms and sharing agreements	▶ Establish program performance measures and indicators
	▶ Develop standardized data collection tools, reporting templates and data management systems
	▶ Encourage data sharing by signing Information Sharing Agreements / MOUs with government departments, agencies, and private sector
	▶ Develop accountability frameworks to drive program planning and program spending decisions
	▶ Create personal identifiers to track education and employment pathways
Use LMI to help people find careers and jobs	▶ Provide information on career choices and educational pathways to achieve career goals
	▶ Survey job seekers to find out what information they want and where they seek out information
	▶ Develop a centralized system that connects the skills of job seekers with job vacancies
	▶ Present labour market forecasts by sector and region
Use LMI to build career pathways early on	▶ Encourage career dreaming
	▶ Showcase career options and role models
	▶ Develop education and career roadmaps
Complement LMI with other forms of information	▶ Learn from best practices within and outside the NWT
	▶ Foster informal information exchange and networking

What We Heard – Highlights	
Education and Employment Supports	
Provide centralized career supports	▶ Create a single-window source for information and advice (connected with LMI)
	▶ Leverage opportunities through partnerships
	▶ Connect availability of supports to demand
	▶ Develop shared delivery platforms
Increase awareness of education and employment supports	▶ Build on success of career development and counselling
	▶ Promote programs utilizing a variety of platforms. Different users and demographic groups seek out information in different ways.
	▶ Implement a coordinated outreach plan including possibility of joint public-private outreach
Increase opportunities for educational and employment success	▶ Develop service pathway maps
	▶ Increase youth experiences outside the NWT
	▶ Improve childcare, eldercare, housing and peer supports for those studying or working away from their home communities
	▶ Increase mentorship and practice based learning opportunities
Review education & employment supports	▶ Review existing programs to ensure relevancy and value. Program decisions and investment should align with LMI.
	▶ Streamline service delivery amongst providers and expand program delivery through partnerships and flexible training models
	▶ Match timing of funding and program delivery to program need
	▶ Review wage subsidies to increase hiring of students and recent graduates
Review SFA funding model	▶ Allow two years of funding for upgrading
	▶ offer remissible loans for trades to incentivize working in the NWT
	▶ Fund traditional educational programs, online programs and graduate degrees
	▶ Consider offering free postsecondary education for NWT residents
Address education and employment gaps	▶ Increase cultural and residential school awareness
	▶ Introduce accreditation of transferable skills
	▶ Remove employment disincentives (income assistance and housing)
Improve career development supports	▶ Offer time off for training, training subsidies, funding for travel, online training, and career coaching



What We Heard – Highlights	
Skills and Postsecondary Education	
Advance community based training and education	▶ Explore opportunities to expand reach of programs through the use of learning technology and platforms
	▶ Develop partnerships to expand program options in smaller communities
	▶ Introduce culturally relevant and inclusive teaching styles
	▶ Discuss creation and expansion of regional training centres
	▶ Increase community based governance over education
Improve transition from high school to postsecondary education, training & employment	▶ Connect S4S strategy with ERI
	▶ Improve literacy and math skills to satisfy training and job entry requirements and future employment success
	▶ Teach life skills, job readiness skills, safety training, WHMIS, food preparedness and trades preparedness classes in high school
	▶ Address concerns regarding social passing and upgrading
	▶ Integrate work placements into high school curriculum and college programs
	▶ Expand Schools North Apprenticeship Program
	▶ Increase incentives for employers to hire students
Increase apprenticeship training and number of journeypersons	▶ Improve profile of apprenticeships and parity of esteem
	▶ Create incentives for graduates to live and work in NWT
	▶ Explore online and tele-apprenticeships and engaging retired trades people
	▶ re-evaluate Apprenticeship Training on the Job wage subsidy
Expand on-the-land accredited training and education opportunities	▶ Increase number of Northerners with university degrees
	▶ Build practical knowledge and skills applicable to multiple jobs
	▶ Restore cultural identity and values
	▶ Promote economic self-sufficiency
Provide training and supports to expand the traditional skills economy	▶ Capitalize on existing skills and community assets
	▶ Provide small business training
	▶ Foster elder-youth mentorship
	▶ Partner with arts council and tourism industry to provide grants and zero interest loans and to connect small businesses with market opportunities
Encourage entrepreneurship	▶ Provide entrepreneurship training and coaching
	▶ Offer financial supports and tax incentives to entrepreneurs

What We Heard – Highlights	
Recruitment and Retention	
Promote NWT as a great place to live and work	▶ Capitalize on Come Make Your Mark Campaign and Spectacular NWT
	▶ Establish community welcome programs and newcomer network
	▶ Invest in recreational facilities and community health projects
	▶ Prioritize workplace wellness
	▶ Establish respectful and safe workplace policies
	▶ Create professional and personal networks
	▶ Highlight workplace advancement opportunities
	▶ Develop workforce exit survey
Prioritize NWT workers	▶ Increase hiring targets for Aboriginal and NWT resident workers
	▶ Encourage mining companies to expand pick up points in the NWT and increase training commitments
	▶ Address concern that hiring outside NWT has extended to entry level positions
	▶ Make connections with youth studying and working outside NWT to come home
	▶ Improve GNWT hiring process to ensure it is open, inclusive and transparent
	▶ Match people in training to jobs
	▶ Provide wage subsidies for IA or EI hires
	▶ Increase cross cultural awareness
Address persistent retention challenges	▶ Address housing, high costs of living, safety, connectivity and quality of education concerns
	▶ Develop recruitment plans to address persistent labour shortages
	▶ Reform payroll taxes and personal tax exemptions
	▶ Offer incentives for home ownership
Help small and medium sized businesses attract and retain workers	▶ Extend wage subsidies and recruitment support
	▶ Reduce GNWT salaries (especially for entry level positions)
	▶ Subsidize training and professional development
Expand employee training and professional development opportunities	▶ Encourage employers to invest in employees
	▶ Develop employee learning plans and career growth pathways
	▶ promote professional networks, mentorship and job shadowing
Increase number of trainers and educators	▶ Develop long term recruitment and retention strategy
	▶ Foster relationships between communities, trainers and agencies

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In winter 2015, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) met with stakeholders across the Northwest Territories (NWT) to discuss the Skills 4 Success (S4S) Initiative. The Skills 4 Success Engagement Report offers an account of what we heard. It captures the perspectives, ideas and guidance of NWT residents on how to build skills, knowledge and attitudes for employment success. It is anchored in a belief that our people are the driving force behind a vibrant economy and healthy thriving communities. The document reflects the handprints of all residents across the NWT who shared their time, experiences, insights and guidance.

The Skills 4 Success Engagement Report presents summarized information collected during regional stakeholder engagement sessions, the Skills 4 Success Symposium and results from an online survey.

The report is structured as follows:

- Introduction
- Vision, Purpose and Objectives of the Skills 4 Success Initiative
- Stakeholder Engagement Purpose
- Engagement Methods
- Engagement Summary
  - Facilitated Regional Focus Groups
  - Skills 4 Success Symposium
  - Online survey
- Next Steps

## 2. VISION, PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE SKILLS 4 SUCCESS INITIATIVE

The Skills 4 Success Initiative is about empowering NWT residents with skills, knowledge, and attitudes to find meaningful employment and to participate in healthy thriving communities.

Building the capacity of NWT residents is vital to ensuring successful implementation of the devolution agreement and Aboriginal self-government agreements, and participating in

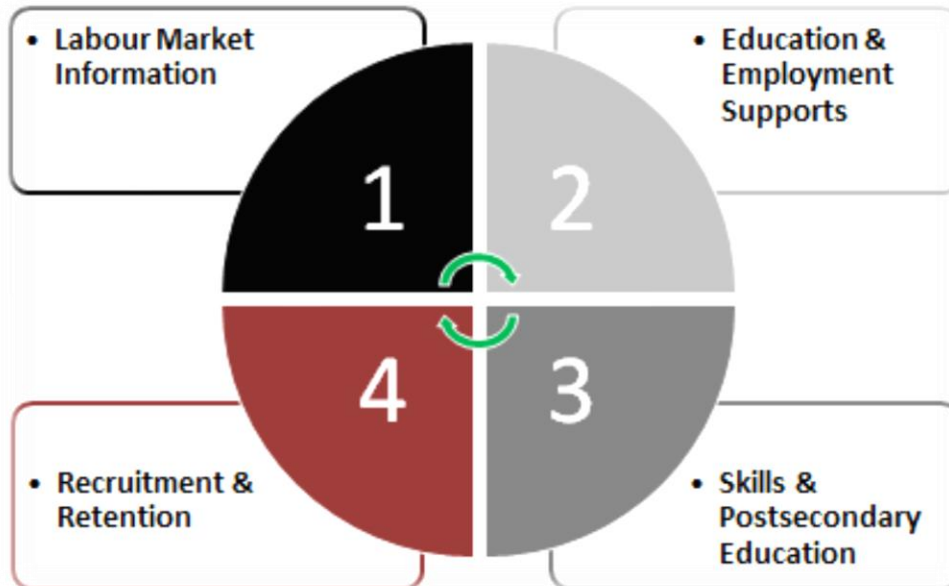
existing and emerging economic opportunities. As a territory, it is important that we collectively examine whether or not the education programs, supports and pathways in place will lead to the desired social and economic outcomes for both individuals and communities in the NWT.

“Skills 4 Success is about capitalizing on the skills, knowledge and talents of our people – the NWT’s number one resource - and the driving force behind our economy and healthy thriving communities.”

- Premier Robert R. McLeod,  
Government of the Northwest Territories

The Skills 4 Success Initiative takes a systematic approach to advance four key objectives (figure 1) in an effort to improve employment success in the NWT.

Figure 1: The Four Key Objectives of the Skills 4 Success Initiative



1. **Labour Market Information** – better understand current and future labour market needs and demands;
2. **Education and Employment Supports** – ensure that supports and incentives are relevant, effective and aligned with evolving labour market needs and demands;
3. **Skills and Postsecondary Education** – ensure that Northern residents have access to adult and postsecondary education and skills training programs and pathways that lead to employment; and,
4. **Recruitment and Retention** – ensure that the skills needs of employers and businesses are met to strengthen economic diversification and sustainable growth in the NWT.

### 3. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PURPOSE

The objective of the stakeholder engagement was to organize and facilitate multiple targeted engagement activities across the NWT in order to solicit input on the topics of interest to the Skills 4 Success Initiative. The engagement process provided an opportunity for a cross-section of key stakeholders to provide their varying perspectives and information related to: the labour market information, education and employment supports, skills and postsecondary education, and recruitment and retention activities in the NWT.

To support the public engagement process, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment, drafted discussion papers around the four key objectives of the Skills 4 Success Initiative. The discussion papers were developed to provide foundational information to stimulate public discussion on how to improve employment success, close skill gaps for in-demand jobs, more effectively respond to community, employer and industry needs and ensure that supports and incentives are relevant, effective and aligned with labour market needs in the NWT.

In order to ensure that the stakeholder engagement component of the S4S Initiative was comprehensive in nature, three methods of data collection were employed. These included:

- Facilitated Regional Focus Groups
- NWT Skills 4 Success Symposium
- Online Survey

Input and feedback collected throughout the engagement process will inform the development of a 10-year strategic framework that will set out new direction for adult and postsecondary education, and skills training in the NWT.

## 4. ENGAGEMENT METHODS

### 4.1 Facilitated Regional Focus Groups

Focus groups were facilitated in each of the five regions (Beaufort-Delta, Sahtu, Dehcho, South Slave, and North Slave). Each focus group targeted a different audience: (1) Students, (2) Job Seekers, (3) Education/Training Providers and (4) Employers. The aim was to engage with participants in focused group discussions in order to foster increased participation and input in the process.

Focus groups were promoted with the assistance of the ECE regional superintendents and the support of local Aurora College representatives. Promotion occurred through advertisement (e.g., flyers posted at training centres and on community boards) and direct contact (e.g., phone calls, letters of invitation emailed to local employers and job seekers). Additional advertisement and recruitment was undertaken by regional staff.

Regional Focus groups provided an opportunity for key stakeholders (Students, Job Seekers, Education/Training Providers and Employers) to talk in some detail about their experience with the NWT labour market and current education and training supports. More specifically, the questions focused on the four discussion paper topics:

- Labour Market Information (LMI)
- Education and Employment Supports (EES)
- Skills and Postsecondary Education (SPSE)
- Recruitment and Retention (RR)

**Table 1: Stakeholder Engagement communities and the total number of stakeholders who participated in the process by community**

Region	Community	Date Visited (2015)	Number of Sessions	Total Number of Participants
Beaufort Delta	Inuvik	February 23 - 25	6	51
Sahtu	Norman Wells	February 25 - 27	5	30
Dehcho	Fort Simpson	February 23 - 24	4	20
South Slave	Hay River	February 23 - 24	4	21
	Fort Smith	February 25 - 26	4	8
North Slave	Yellowknife	March 2 - 4	5	20
	Behchokò	April 8	2	13

## 4.2 Skills 4 Success Symposium

The Skills 4 Success Symposium was held at the Explorer Hotel on March 10 – 12, 2015. The theme of the symposium was *Improving Employment Success for NWT Residents*. The total number of registered symposium delegates was 168 people, including representation from a cross section of Federal, Territorial and Aboriginal Governments, education and training partners, Industry and business, Professional Associations, students and apprentices, and non-government organizations.

The format of the Skills 4 Success Symposium included presentations, keynote addresses, panel discussions and facilitated breakout sessions, as well as two evening receptions to welcome delegates and network. The breakout sessions were framed around the four objectives of the S4S Initiative (LMI, EES, SPSE and RR) and were designed to gather input and guidance from symposium delegates to help shape the development of the Skills 4 Success 10-year strategic framework document.

Four concurrent breakout sessions were held during four time slots across the two main days of the symposium. This format allowed participants to rotate through the four topics: LMI, EES, SPSE, and RR. In each breakout session, participants were divided into subgroups of four to eight people. Participants were given 60 minutes to come up with strategic goals related to the current topic of focus and develop steps to be taken to reach the goals. They then reflected on the outcomes, and identified key stakeholders for each of the strategic goals. Groups were asked to share back one goal, idea or issue for discussion.

**“The breakout sessions are designed to collect input and feedback on how to make this happen.”**

- Dana Heide, Associate Deputy Minister,  
Department of Education, Culture and  
Employment

## 4.3 Online Survey

The third method of data collection used to seek feedback and input for the Skills 4 Success Initiative was an online survey with survey questions targeting: (1) Students, (2) Job Seekers, (3) Education/Training Providers, (4) Employers, (5) Employed Persons and (6) Retirees. The survey was intended to expand the reach of engagement by offering an opportunity for individuals not able to attend a focus group or the symposium to provide input.

The online survey went live February 26, 2015 and remained open until April 10, 2015.

A total of 337 people completed the survey. Table 2 presents the number of people in each target group that completed the survey.

**Table 2: Number of people that completed the survey, per target group**

Stakeholder Group	Number of Survey Respondents
Student	79
Employed	78
Employer	72
Educator/Trainer	60
Job Seeker/Unemployed	24
Retired	24

## 5. ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY – WHAT WE HEARD

The following sections summarize what was heard during the facilitated regional focus group sessions, the Skills 4 Success Symposium and input from the online survey. This report does not attempt to analyze the findings - its intent is to share what was heard. The information is organized in the following way:

- 5.1 – Facilitated Regional Focus Groups
- 5.2 – Skills 4 Success Symposium
- 5.3 – Online Survey

### 5.1 Facilitated Regional Focus Groups

The regional focus groups provided opportunities for Students, Job Seekers, Education/Training Providers and Employers across the territory to share their experiences and knowledge of adult education, skills training and postsecondary education programs and supports, the NWT labour market, and the intersection of training and education and the NWT labour market. These stakeholder groups discussed what is working in the current system, what is not working and what needs to be improved, including any gaps in service or barriers to employment. It also allowed educators, trainers and administrators to discuss issues of cost effectiveness and policy regarding supports available to service users.

We heard some messages that cut across the four pillars and were shared by multiple stakeholder groups and regions.

*Employees benefit from making personal connections to employment.*

- Employees generally want to remain in their community or region of origin. This affects training, recruitment, retention and general overall satisfaction. Pursuing solutions appropriate to the region and community was seen as encouraging local employment success.

*Celebrate success and showcase career pathways.*

- Education successes should be celebrated and showcased. Educators noted the importance of students seeing people they can identify with success. Students attending Aurora College in Inuvik, for example, noted that by attending postsecondary education they were able to be positive role models in their home communities. Many students understood that by getting an education they set a positive example for youth.
- Educators and employers suggested the need to present career options and pathways. Students and job seekers need to know what career options are available and have access to pathways to attain those jobs. Where possible, career options and pathways should be illustrated using real life examples. One participant noted: “Young people need to be able to see where they can go and believe they can get there.”

*Effective training and skills development requires building a strong foundation.*

- Participants in all stakeholder groups identified a need to build a “culture of education” in the NWT where it is the norm that students graduate high school, receive post-secondary job training and education and find meaningful work. Postsecondary education and training should be seen as part of the education pathway for all students. Stakeholders across groups shared a view that building a culture of education must be championed by community leaders and be reflected in community priorities, regional priorities, and territorial priorities. One participant in Inuvik said: “a strong economy and a bright future for the NWT begins with education, education, education! We can’t talk about growing our economy without talking about education first.”
- Preparation for entering the workforce should begin as early as possible. Many respondents noted it should start before students enter high school.
- Healthy, safe, and supportive environments are preconditions for educational success.
- Creating cultural conditions that connect the individual to employment would predispose the NWT to greater labour market success. This was discussed in various ways, but frequently involved supporting wellness and well-being and cultural identity. There are opportunities to link to other ECE programs, such as Education Renewal, and the Cultural Places program, and other GNWT departments, such as Health and Social Services, and the NWT Housing Corporation, and Industry, Tourism and Investment.

*We all play a role in facilitating change.*

- Participants acknowledged that the GNWT plays a critical role in coordinating education, training and employment programs and supports, providing labour market information, and developing education and related policy and programming. They recognized, however, that



improving educational and employment success required collaborative efforts by communities, schools, employers, support agencies and all levels of government. Several participants stressed the importance of community leadership as being pivotal toward making education a community success. Lasting change, participants noted, requires community ownership over change processes and a unified voice among elders and leadership that education is important.

*Train and invest to support a diversified economy.*

- Participants noted the importance of the mining and oil and gas sectors as drivers of economic growth and employment. Many participants noted a need to focus on education and training that will diversify the economy given the recent pullback in commodity markets and a decrease in oil prices and exploration activity. Suggestions included: technological education (Information Technology (IT)/Information Management (IM)), basic internet and computer skills), customer service and entrepreneurship skills.

### ***Differences between Regions***

Generally speaking, participants from different regions had similar concerns. Variations occurred based on the local economy. Discussions in the Sahtu and Beaufort Delta discussed the oil and gas economy, while other regions referred more to mining and renewable resource economies (e.g., in the South Slave participants mentioned wood pellet production, timber harvesting, geothermal and wind energy generation, greenhouse production and morel mushroom harvesting).

Outside of the capital, region-specific solutions, such as regional training centres and locally-appropriate training and supports, and the desire for more regional control over resources and programming received greater mention. Participants from smaller communities also tended to advocate for some types of supports such as child care, housing and in-community training, while in Yellowknife, Hay River and Fort Smith, the cost of living, suitable and affordable housing, and transportation were of interest. In Behchokò, participants focused on the need for more trades training and support. They cited the lack of journeyman and access to programs such as welding. People from communities located outside the capital were more likely to say that their options for training and employment were limited in their region.

In Yellowknife, more discussion occurred around ensuring sufficient funding for training and to offset the cost of living. Job seekers in larger centres (i.e., Yellowknife, Hay River and Fort Smith) were also more likely to mention searching for jobs online, probably reflecting local variation in internet access and usage.

**Differences between Groups**

Responses tended to reflect the needs of the cohorts in the focus groups. Students and job seekers focused upon the effective provision of employment supports, educators/trainers upon preparing students for the market and improving the quality of life in the communities, and employers upon creating conditions that allow them to be competitive. Some specific notes on groups' responses are included in the discussion of the individual topics below.

**5.1.1 Labour Market Information**

Educators and employers described the types of labour market information (LMI) that would be most useful to them.

- Comparative data presented by community, region and sector. This data includes wages by education level, demographic information, and job vacancies. Demographic data that distinguishes between genders as well as Aboriginal versus non-Aboriginal.
- Trends and medium-term forecasts of job demand, housing, and cost of living.
- The qualifications required for different jobs. This should reference the skillsets required, not simply qualifications.
- Recruitment and retention rates by community, region and sector. This may assist in a broader discussion of best practices in attracting and keeping employees.
- Availability and turnover rates of trainers and educators (possibly journeymen) in each community.
- Future job forecasts so they can start preparing now with career counselling training.

Students and job seekers also discussed labour market information largely in terms of what jobs are available, how they go about looking for work (online, band office, employment centres) and what skills they would need to get a job. In general, students and job seekers from all regions preferred having information consolidated into a single-window source. Ideally information could be found in person (as with a storefront with peer support or employment navigators). In Behchokò, Hay River and Fort Smith we heard how individuals would like to know the numbers of specific careers that will be needed in their regions and in the NWT in the future so they can plan now on where to focus their training and efforts. Any job forecast needs to emphasize demand for labour due to replacement as well as potential sector specific expansion and growth.

**Challenges and gaps:** All stakeholder groups identified ease of access to labour market data as persistent issue. Data may be available but unconsolidated, or organized in such a way that does not allow easy access or comparison. Focus group participants noted that part of the problem is the segregation of data by different government departments and agencies such as ECE, Statistics Canada and others. The importance of data security and privacy were identified as limiting factors that potentially inhibit free sharing of data.

### 5.1.2 Education and Employment Supports

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Employment and education supports help to ensure success in the workforce. They do so either by assisting NWT residents to find and retain work or access adult and postsecondary education, and skills training opportunities.

As noted in section 5.1.1, one option discussed during a job seekers' focus group in Yellowknife was for the GNWT to facilitate **more centralized career supports**. Several participants in multiple communities suggested that services for job seekers and employers alike should be provided through as few windows as possible. Participants noted the need to form partnerships between employers, agencies, communities and other levels of government to share labour market information, centralize job postings and volunteer opportunities, and connect supply to demand. It was recognized that standards and shared platforms would need to be developed.

#### 5.1.2.1 Awareness of Opportunities

Students and job seekers discussed the methods by which they typically seek and find information on employment. These included online job banks, postings at career development offices, published opportunities, inquiry with employers, and word of mouth. Both job seekers and students tended to turn to online resources first, though this varied based on different factors (e.g., age of individual, availability of internet in community).

**Success stories:** Several participants described ECE career counsellors as being useful in helping to assess career directions and job opportunities.

**Suggestions heard:** The GNWT could advertise postings and programs more creatively, such as using radio broadcast and social media. Advertising opportunities could be coordinated between employers and the GNWT.

In terms of centralization of supports, the GNWT could consider offering students and jobseekers a single-window source for information and advice. The model suggested was a storefront location centralizing services available from territorial and federal partners, employment contact, and peer support or employment navigators. This model is basically an expansion of existing ECE Regional Service Centres, offering more personal assistance to clients and including partnership with non-GNWT agencies.

#### 5.1.2.2 Education Supports

The most commonly discussed issues by students in terms of education supports were funding and housing. Family supports were also mentioned often. (Note that there is some overlap of these points with the discussion of Skills and Postsecondary Education in Section 5.1.3 below.) Some students described funding as being limited and variant depending on which funding criteria were met. Other students spoke favourably of Student Financial Assistance (SFA) as it allowed them to attend College. In Behchokò, participants noted that SFA should be available for trades training as it was prior to 2008. Inadequate housing was characterized as being a major deterrent to training as well as hiring and

retention. Some participants also called for more assistance in family supports while pursuing education, such as child care and elder support.

**Suggestions heard:** Daycare services should be provided on College campuses to support students with young children. Some participants noted a need for a NWT housing strategy that coordinates all government departments to address housing issues as part of a unified effort. Peer support programs to assist those accessing training outside of home communities appears to be working well and was suggested to be expanded.

#### 5.1.2.3 Career Supports

Greater assistance was called for by job seekers and employers in Fort Simpson in the areas of career development. This included developing resume writing and basic administrative skills. Similar to the supports needed to pursue education, we heard in Fort Simpson that family supports were needed, especially assistance in child and elder care. Participants noted that the high cost of childcare prevented them from seeking employment. All focus groups in Hay River and Fort Smith supported more career counselling and development as well.

**Success stories:** Several participants described ECE career development officers as being useful in helping to assess career directions and opportunities. In general, students identified mentorship as important in developing professional skills.

**Challenges and gaps:** Cost of living was raised by job seekers and students as a factor in determining success. Cited here was the opportunity to live comfortably and engage in leisure activities. An issue raised repeatedly was access to affordable housing. Inadequate housing was portrayed as a major deterrent to training, hiring and retention.

Some employers noted that they effectively lost hours of work when employees went for training. Specific concerns were raised in the area of the timing of funding delivery (which does not always match the timelines of training programs) and what the funding covers (federal and territorial funding does not always line up with training programs).

**Suggestions Heard:** Career paths need to be better understood and communicated to job seekers. For example, a process-based approach can show how people came to be in their jobs, and provide real-world examples of options for advancement. Career choices can be made personal.

### 5.1.3 Skills and Postsecondary Education

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#### 5.1.3.1 Advancing Training and Education

Training and education were mentioned by all groups as being linked to employment success. The question was how to provide training and education appropriate to personal and labour demands.

**Success stories:** Trainers indicated that the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) and Schools North Apprenticeship Program (SNAP) were examples of successful programs. SNAP was singled out by several trainers and students as creating good connections between students and trainers.

**Challenges and gaps:** Funding for ALBE students was noted as limited and not available to all applicants due to prerequisites and eligibility requirements. Logistical issues were identified as another critical challenge and include assistance such as childcare and also the limitation of offering courses and programs in all communities. The lack of knowledge about where and how to access supports was frequently cited, especially among job seekers. Some participants, for example, did not know where to access information or seek counselling for career options to decide which postsecondary education (PSE) program to enrol in. Driver training was cited in Behchokò and Norman Wells as an issue of frustration. In Behchokò, for example, it was suggested there is no driver training for class 1, 3, and 5 licences. Basic driver training is offered once per year to a limited number of people only. If you are not able to get in, you need to wait another year before the course is offered again. If you complete driver training in Norman Wells, you can only drive in the region.

**Suggestions Heard:** Participants in the student and job seeker groups expressed interest in training and working in their community or region of origin. A suggestion discussed in one job seeker group was the creation of Regional Training and Training Centres that would encourage regional participation (and potentially retention). Similarly, offering more online training was identified to help address the desire to learn in one's own community as well as increasing the potential audience for training and education programs. Participants also suggested increasing partnerships with correctional services to reach the many young adults in jail.

#### 5.1.3.2 Trainers and Educators

The Education/Training Providers group was asked how do we ensure that we have the educators/trainers necessary to increase the skills and postsecondary education levels across the NWT? The most common responses were increasing the number of positions, increasing funding and fostering relationships between trainers and agencies.

Several Education Administrators indicated that job security is an issue in attracting and retaining educators, particularly when windows of time occur in which no work is available.

Participants also noted relationships with their colleagues as being important to developing robust skillsets and sharing information.

**Challenges and gaps:** It was noted in two regions that government departments and agencies rarely work together, even if they share the same space. A closer working relationship between ECE and the Department of Health and Social Services (for example) might improve program delivery.

**Suggestions Heard:** Develop a long term strategy requiring the hire of educators/trainers for extended terms. Pursue multi-year funding commitments from CanNor and others. Conduct regional and territorial assessments of the training delivered in the NWT. Establish structures to communicate between trainers and between departments/agencies. Encourage connections between trainers after their own training is complete to support one another in future endeavors.

#### 5.1.3.3 Education pathways

Linkages were made repeatedly to K-12 education. Several participants noted that participating in skills training and postsecondary education opportunities depends on students exiting the K-12 system being able and ready to work and/or access further education and training. Linking the Skills 4 Success Initiative to *Education Renewal* was identified as an opportunity to support a pathway from K to employment. Improving high school outcomes especially in reading, writing and basic math and developing employment capacity in high school were cited as critical focal points to develop a NWT workforce. Employers wanted to see more life skills and job readiness skills being taught in high schools. Some Employer participants also recommended that more trades courses be offered in high school, including preparing students for trades' prerequisites as early as grade 10. Social passing and upgrading were raised consistently as issues of concern. It was cited by employers as being frustrating and undermining any faith in what a grade 12 education means. One participant in Norman Wells expressed frustration noting that often students finishing at the top of the class still need to access upgrading.

#### 5.1.3.4 Transferable Skills

Participants across regions commented on the importance of focusing on transferable skills. In Inuvik, participants stressed teaching practical skills and demonstrating to students how they apply to different types of employment. Participants noted that using a tape measure and measurements for cooking require similar basic math. Traditional skills and practices can be adapted and explained in ways that apply to other jobs.

#### 5.1.3.5 Wellness and Well-being

Numerous participants in each of the four groups linked success in employment and education to personal wellness and community well-being. On several occasions people described well-being, education and employment as being parts of a larger issue. Participants further linked employment success to the creation of positive attitudes towards education and training. Several participants articulated that the territory needs to build a culture where postsecondary education is the norm and part of the education pathway for all students. Issues such as drug and alcohol dependency, previous legal troubles and trauma stemming from the residential school system were all seen as factors that impact upon education and employment success. These issues and factors in turn affect hiring, retention and perception of workers by employers. It was noted they also affect education and training, both by limiting options and limiting the ability to succeed. In Inuvik, Educators identified 'the need for communities and people to be well' as the top issue to be addressed for broader educational success.

It was remarked across engagement sessions that building wellness starts at a grassroots level with individual commitment, community cohesion and strong community leadership. Opinion on the role that various levels of government should play was mixed ranging from providing critical supports to stepping back entirely. What was clearly stated, however, is that communities cannot expect or depend on the 'government' for the solution. The impetus for change and improvements to individual and community well-being must come from individuals, community residents and local leaders.

#### 5.1.4 Recruitment and Retention

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##### 5.1.4.1 Recruitment

Most information on recruitment came from the employer groups which were specifically asked about recruitment strategies and issues. Recruitment occurred through a number of methods and was increasingly done online. However, word of mouth is still a common means of connecting with applicants. One employer noted that they offer an incentive to current employees if someone they refer gets hired. The employer has found that the approach works better than any other recruitment method and the referred workers tend to stay longer.

Quality of life was raised several times by employers in regards to ensuring recruitment. It was suggested that the GNWT and others need to start “selling the lifestyle” of the north, and creating connections between potential applicants and the places where jobs are available. While some employers had heard of the *Come Make Your Mark* campaign, others’ had not.

Some employers noted it was difficult to compete with the GNWT for skilled workers. Small private sector employers also noted they cannot offer incentives or relocation packages that larger employers often do. Employers noted the burden of always being in recruitment mode because of high turn-over. One participant stated that due to vacancies, “we are missing out on 20-25% growth in revenues”.

Barriers to recruitment noted by participants included the following:

- Limited budgets for advertising (especially in non-government organizations).
- Limited numbers of applicants. Some people are not qualified, some not able to work, and others apparently unwilling to work.
- Difficulty finding employees with Class 5 drivers licences.
- Competing with government and larger industry for job seekers (Smaller private sector employers could not offer the same incentives or competitive salaries as the GNWT and large industry).
- Lack of information and/or complex process to access funding and programs.

Other groups stressed the importance of ensuring that recruitment targeted local workers first. Reliance on non-local labour was seen to decrease opportunities for residents and limit the amount of money put back into local economies. Many groups identified the need to reduce southern recruits and stop hiring fly-in/fly-out workers. Participants both recognized the complexity of the issue, and noted that the GNWT and industry need to invest in training local people. Educators in Inuvik expressed concern that hiring non-locals had extended to entry level positions singling out the hospitality and tourism sectors.

**Suggestions Heard:** Recruitment could be assisted by offering incentives for recruiters (a “finder’s fee”). Employers, including the GNWT, should be encouraged to develop recruitment plans, ideally conforming to a standard led by the government. Positions that can be filled from within the territory could be identified, and positions which cannot be filled within the territory treated separately from those that can.

Some participants focused on making connections with youth as a means to improve recruitment success. It was suggested that youth be enabled to recognize and articulate their strengths. They (and other job seekers) could develop their resume and interview skills through partnering with industry associations and the Department of Human Resources. This training could begin in high school, necessitating some coordination with NWT Education Renewal and K-12 programming.

Programs to allow employers wage subsidies or offer training opportunities were suggested to help offset the advantage of GNWT in competing for applicants. Several employers indicated that they needed more information on existing funding and programs.

Career Development Officers (CDOs) can assist in recruitment in communities. However, applicant screening may remain the responsibility of the employer. It was suggested that CDOs might be able to do more in the area of screening. However, there were some other limits to capacity that originate from other sources, such as the difficulty in having fingerprinting or medical examinations performed in some communities (e.g., Wekweètì ).

#### **5.1.4.2 Retention**

All four groups of participants were asked questions on employee retention in the NWT. Responses tended to reflect the needs of the individual groups – students and job seekers focused upon the provision of employment supports, educators/trainers upon improving conditions, housing, and quality of life in the communities, and employers upon creating conditions that allow them to be competitive in retaining employees.

**Challenges and gaps:** High turnover in employment was mentioned or implied in most focus groups. Some noted that the high number of jobs in resource extraction (mining, petroleum) and related fields encouraged the development of a transient workforce.

The principal challenge to retention noted was financial. People follow the money. For the NWT to compete with other jurisdictions, employers have to pay a premium. Some small and medium sized private sector employers felt they were a stepping stone for jobs with government or the mining sector. In fact, one employer noted how frustrating it is to train an employee only to have them quickly move on to a higher paid position in the government or industry. The constant labour shortage and costs of training new employees make it very difficult for small businesses to remain operational.

**Suggestions Heard:** More funding was suggested for programs to help employers offset competition for workers with the GNWT. These could include wage subsidies or training grants for new employees. Some participants suggested that GNWT/industry lower their wages instead of offering subsidies. Other incentives to retain employees discussed by employers included reform of payroll taxes, increasing the availability of housing, and making investments in community and recreational infrastructure.

#### **5.1.4.3 Identity and Community**

Participants from all regions and groups linked employee retention to identity and community. This was explained as encouraging personal growth, forming community connections, and fostering supportive



networks. Some participants focused on the need to develop an identity that was connected to the North. Participants framed different suggestions related to these concepts: provide cultural orientation to life in the NWT for new arrivals, establish welcome networks, provide cultural awareness training, help employers understand and anticipate northern culture and communicate Northern identity as something all NWT residents should take pride in.

One employer stated that recruitment and retention depended in part upon creating “pride in being here and a sense of the future.” Educators in Inuvik echoed this sentiment, stating that creating a sense of identity is critical to building an educated and skilled workforce. The responsibility for forging links to our northern culture was at least partly identified as a GNWT responsibility. As another employer stated, “They have to remember that ECE has a C in it.”

### 5.1.5 Other Issues

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**Priority hiring is problematic** – In the Yellowknife and Hay River focus groups with job seekers and employers, the GNWT priority hiring policy was portrayed as not being conducive to building a strong workforce. While some participants benefited from it, others saw it as restricting options for job seekers and not encouraging the hiring of the most qualified individuals.

**Regional Disparity** – It was recommended by some participants that the GNWT tailor its programs and supports to the local level. This could ensure that solutions are relevant first to the community, and then to the region and the territory. As noted earlier, some participants linked elements of employment success to senses of identity and community.

**Information and Technology** – Some students, job seekers and educators noted that there was a need to develop the NWT knowledge-based economy. Online training was previously mentioned as an option for increasing educational opportunities. Suggestions included investments in technological education, either by offering IT/IM education in the territory, or expanding basic internet and computer skills training. A brake on the utility of these skills is the limited bandwidth and number of computers in smaller communities.

**Miscellaneous Costs** – Educators in Inuvik suggested that partnerships could be forged between education institutions and transport companies, in a manner similar to beneficiary pricing on airlines. Students and others could benefit from resident pricing. Similarly, tax incentives could be increased for training or conferences, or more professional development options offered in tax returns.

## 5.2 Skills 4 Success Symposium

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This section provides a high-level overview of the Skills 4 Success Symposium and is organized according to the event’s agenda, with the breakout sessions grouped and summarized as the final subsection.

The Skills 4 Success Symposium was held at the Explorer Hotel in Yellowknife, NWT on March 10 – 12, 2015.

### 5.2.1 Welcoming Remarks

Premier Robert McLeod opened the symposium during an evening welcome reception held on March 10.

Premier McLeod began his opening remarks by acknowledging the important role individuals, families and communities play in a prosperous NWT. He acknowledged the GNWT's responsibility and control over NWT land and resource management which was enabled through the NWT Devolution, April 1, 2014, and the importance of continuing to evolve Aboriginal governance through land claim and self-government processes. He introduced the Skills 4 Success Initiative to symposium delegates, explaining that S4S is about tapping into the wealth of knowledge and skills of NWT residents.

**“Together we are working towards stronger self-determination, stronger self-sufficiency, and a stronger NWT.”**

- Premier Robert R. McLeod,  
Government of the Northwest Territories

While Premier McLeod highlighted the progress in increasing educational outcomes and employment levels over the past 15 years, he was clear that too-large a proportion of the Northern working-age population remains under-educated, under-skilled and unprepared for work. Premier McLeod also recognized that all employment sectors face increasing skills and labour shortages due to an aging workforce and competition for skilled workers from other jurisdictions.

Premier McLeod concluded by saying that through government commitment and partnerships, the S4S goals can be reached. He touched on examples of successful GNWT initiatives and projects, such as the Economic Opportunities Strategy, the Mackenzie Valley Fibre Optic Link and the Mackenzie Valley Highway from Wrigley to Tuktoyaktuk to demonstrate the importance of investing in people as being critical to stimulate and benefit from economic development.

### 5.2.2 Opening Remarks

The Honorable Jackson Lafferty, Minister of Education, Culture and Employment, opened Day 1 of the symposium.

Minister Lafferty recognized the critical role the symposium delegates play in adult and postsecondary education, skills training, and the NWT labour market.

**“A skilled NWT workforce will create communities that become magnets for investment – the key to our collective prosperity.”**

- Honorable Jackson Lafferty, Minister of  
Education, Culture and Employment

While there are many successes to be proud of, he acknowledged that the status quo is still falling short of meeting the needs of many Northerners. He further indicated that we have to build on the collective success of organizations represented at the symposium and do things differently. He stressed the importance of strengthening our communities and

maintaining the economic growth of the NWT in the coming years.

Minister Lafferty stated that Skills 4 Success is about closing skill gaps and improving the match between the labour market and skill sets. He connected the Skills 4 Success Initiative with efforts to increase access to early childhood education and ECE's *Education Renewal and Innovation Framework: Directions for Change*, which recognizes the need to prepare youth for learning, personal growth and educational success. The Education Renewal and Innovation framework illustrates ECE's commitment to improving the entire educational system. Minister Lafferty said that ambition and confidence result in greater success in the workforce, ultimately resulting in overall improvements in quality of life and healthier communities. He suggested that a skilled workforce puts people at a competitive advantage and will create attractive communities for investment and improve economic sustainability in the NWT.

### 5.2.3 Skills 4 Success Initiative Overview

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Dana Heide, Associate Deputy Minister (ECE) provided an overview of the Skills 4 Success Initiative.

Mr. Heide reaffirmed ECE's commitment to bridging the gap between the skills of workers and the labour market needs. He indicated the need to develop transferable skills and that by improving educational and employment outcomes, many positive social benefits emerge, including improved health and wellness, and a more equitable quality of life. Mr. Heide stated that the Skills 4 Success Initiative and symposium are an opportunity for all to work together and develop innovative ideas. He stressed that the Department is open to changing what is not working and welcomes new suggestions.

**“Our end goal is to improve employment success for NWT residents, close skill gaps for in-demand jobs, and more effectively respond to community, employer and industry needs.”**

- Dana Heide, Associate Deputy Minister,  
Education, Culture and Employment

### 5.2.4 NWT Labour Market Forecast and Needs Assessment

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Anja Jeffrey, Director, Northern and Aboriginal Policy, Conference Board of Canada, presented an overview of the work on the NWT Labour Market Forecast and Needs Assessment to date. She indicated that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment contracted the Conference Board of Canada to undertake a historical review of labour market conditions and demographics within the Northwest Territories, and produce an occupational forecast, which analyzes the top employment occupations over the next 5, 10 and 15 years.<sup>1</sup>

Ms. Jeffrey stated they used the most up-to-date data from the Northwest Territories Bureau of Statistics and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and added that their initial analysis is based on the 2014 Northwest Territories Community Survey. Preliminary findings indicate that a high proportion of forecasted employment opportunities will be driven by replacement demand

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<sup>1</sup> Northwest Territories Labour Market Forecast and Needs Assessment – Preliminary Conclusions. Skills 4 Success Symposium. The Conference Board of Canada. March 10 – 12, 2015.

(e.g., aging workforce) for industry sectors such as the sales and service industry, as well as positions in management, health, and education (particularly in early childhood education).

### 5.2.5 Key Note – Why Aboriginal Leadership and Education Matters

Gabrielle Scrimshaw, Co-Founder and President, Aboriginal Professional Association of Canada gave a powerful keynote address on why Aboriginal leadership and education matters.

“We do have a say in the world these kids are growing up in.”

- Gabrielle Scrimshaw,  
Co-Founder and President,  
Aboriginal Professional Association of Canada

Ms. Scrimshaw portrayed her life through an inspirational and touching account of people and events that shaped her path and the person she is today. Amidst many challenges, Ms. Scrimshaw spoke about the importance of mentorship and family connections that gave her hope and sparked the desire to make a better life for herself.

Ms. Scrimshaw identified two gaps for Aboriginal people: awareness of opportunities and access to networks. She suggested the importance of personal dedication, mentorship and support from colleagues as contributors to success. She observed based on her experience that once Aboriginal people enter the workforce, there are few professional supports provided to them, which motivated her to start the Aboriginal Professional Association of Canada.

“It’s all here waiting for you”

- Elder teaching quoted by Gabrielle Scrimshaw,  
Co-Founder and President,  
Aboriginal Professional Association of Canada

Ms. Scrimshaw urged the audience to consider the Aboriginal population as an opportunity for economic growth. She referenced statistics showing that the Aboriginal population is young, growing, diverse, increasingly urban and increasingly educated. She empowered listeners by reminding them that they can make an impact on a young person’s life and to model by example by doing everything with excellence and integrity and to ‘walk in a good way’.

### 5.2.6 Panel Discussion – What Makes Good Strategy for Skills and Postsecondary Education

The symposium’s first panel discussion was centred on the question “What makes good strategy for skills and postsecondary education?” The panel members included:

- Andy Bevan, Assistant Deputy Minister, Labour and Income Security, Department of Education, Culture and Employment
- Anja Jeffrey, Director, Northern and Aboriginal Policy, Conference Board of Canada
- Erin Freeland Ballantyne, Director, Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning
- Gabrielle Scrimshaw, Co-Founder and President, Aboriginal Professional Association of Canada
- Jane Arychuk, President, Aurora College

The panel was asked to draw upon their own experiences when answering the questions posed.

Question 1 – Comment briefly on why you think the Skills 4 Success Initiative is important.

Panelists noted the Skills 4 Success Initiative is timely, relevant, and an important step toward preparing residents for employment. It was identified as a critical initiative that will match skills development with job demand.

**“We have people in the NWT who want to work and employers who need workers.”**

- Andy Bevan, Assistant Deputy Minister,  
Labour and Income Security, Department of  
Education, Culture and Employment

Ms. Arychuk discussed the importance of S4S to help inform Aurora College’s new strategic plan. The NWT has a large young Aboriginal population and Aurora College wants to ensure they have the proper supports in place for future Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.

Question 2 – Is there a distinct approach or strategy you would like to see enacted to support employment success?

The panelists discussed the need to support skills that people already have and to engage with people who are seeking jobs. Ms. Scrimshaw and Dr. Freeland Ballantyne discussed the importance for Aboriginal youth to see themselves reflected in success. Community members are role models and can motivate other people to think “maybe I can do that, too”.

Ms. Arychuk reminded the audience that employment is not the end goal; there is a continued need to support individuals for further success through learning, mentorship and professional development.

Mr. Bevan and Ms. Jeffrey discussed the importance of labour market information to drive policy and planning decisions. Mr. Bevan stressed that the S4S Initiative will be grounded in labour market information. It is important, he stated, to ensure information is relevant, available, accurate and able to hold up to scrutiny in order to make evidence-based decisions.

Question 3 – What do you see as the most significant social and economic barriers and opportunities to consider while moving forward?

Dr. Freeland Ballantyne highlighted the importance of taking a holistic approach to community health and wellness. She discussed the need to look at strengths in the communities and identify how community members can overcome challenges.

**“There is a significant communication component with a poor understanding in Canada that what happens in the North affects Canada as a whole.”**

- Anja Jeffrey, Director, Northern and Aboriginal  
Policy, Conference Board of Canada

Ms. Scrimshaw and Ms. Arychuk discussed the internet and today’s technology as an opportunity for innovation, stating that the world is at our fingertips and that we need to leverage the tools at our disposal. There is a sense of empowerment and active engagement offered to youth by social media.

The panelists identified challenges, including:

- the need to resolve the disparities between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations;

- the issue of an aging population; and
- competition for labour from the south.

Ms. Jeffrey noted a poor understanding among Canadians that what happens in the North affects Canada as a whole. She stated it is important to highlight opportunities and to share ideas with the rest of Canada, which may result in attracting people to come to the NWT.

*Question 4 – How do we do a better job of using our existing capacity and resources?*

Ms. Scrimshaw indicated that everyone is resource-strapped. Therefore, it is important to determine what resources we have at our disposal now that we can maximize. Ms. Scrimshaw also discussed the need to provide better support systems and focus on retention instead of recruitment.

Dr. Freeland Ballantyne stated that NWT communities are filled with skilled people, she suggested creating new markets with the skills that we have and changing the way we think about capacity.

“Our communities are filled with skilled people – we need to create new markets with skills that we have.”

- Erin Freeland Ballantyne, Director, Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning

“We need to modernize our programs in a way that creates a seamless path from school to employment.”

- Jane Arychuk,  
President, Aurora College

The panelists agreed that working together and fostering partnerships are important. They identified a need to create community capacity inventories (skillsets, programs, stakeholders) to increase our understanding of what is available and where gaps exist.

*Question 5 – What is success?*

Success was defined as:

- Happy and healthy First Nations
- Fulfilled dreams
- A legacy that our children and people in the future can be proud of
- Better-connected residents

Ms. Jeffrey stressed the importance of determining how to measure success so we can evaluate achievement/progress or lack thereof.

*Audience question – What do businesses need to do financially, and regarding workplace culture, to address population changes? What initiatives are important?*

Ms. Scrimshaw identified initiatives like Code Academy, where kids can learn how to code for free, as being important. She discussed the importance of networks and leadership setting the tone of workplace culture.

Audience comment/question – if we focus too much on employment, we lose the dream of other kinds of work – what is the gap from dream to reality? The content is different but the process is the same.

The panelists discussed that, although S4S is very practical, there is still a need to spend time on career dreaming. Ask kids what is it they want to do and then support and encourage them to do it.

Audience question –Travel makes people more worldly. How do we create travel opportunities?

Ms. Arychuk, Ms. Scrimshaw and Ms. Jeffrey discussed the importance of world travel. They suggested supporting small communities to raise funds and open up the world to students. Travel is important as it increases global awareness. They also noted that parents must encourage children and inspire them to think that anything is possible.

Audience question – What is your view on cultural awareness / Aboriginal languages? How could that work to support Aboriginal people working for non-Aboriginal employers?

Dr. Freeland Ballantyne stressed the need to increase investments in cultural awareness and development. She discussed language as the root of culture and the dual need to build culture and language, and be open to a global world.

### 5.2.7 Education Renewal and Innovation Framework: Directions for Change

Sophie Call, Director, Education Renewal and John Stewart, Director, Early Childhood and School Services, from the Department of ECE presented on the *Education Renewal Framework: Directions for Change*.

Mr. Stewart began with an overview of the NWT labour supply and future labour demand. He stressed that we need children to stay in school and to receive a formal education. This will be critical to reaching our end goal: supporting the development of capable Northern citizens. He indicated that currently there is a mismatch between the skills of students coming out of our education system, and the jobs that are available.

“The real end in mind goes beyond the transition to the labour market; it is in fact the capable Northern citizen. That is what we are aiming for.”

- John Stewart, Director,  
Early Childhood and School Services, ECE

“We are all part of education renewal, and together we can, and we are, and we will, change the future of our territory.”

- Sophie Call, Director,  
Education Renewal, ECE

Ms. Call indicated that a critically important area being addressed is the amount of time students are attending school and that an 80% attendance rate from kindergarten to grade 9 equates to an education deficit of two years by the time the student reaches grade 10. Issues that are affecting student attendance and performance in school are

that students report not feeling safe, that they are dealing with trauma (e.g., family violence) and they are hungry.

Ms. Call provided a brief overview of the Early Development Instrument (EDI), which is a population-based measure (taken annually) that provides a snapshot of groups of children’s development. The EDI

is applied in kindergarten and measures emotional, social, physical, cognitive, language and communication development.

Mr. Stewart stated that ECE attributes, in part, the current state and lack of success of young people in the education system to the issue of residential schooling. He also indicated that they need to examine the schools' curriculum and methods of teaching. He noted a disconnect between how students learn and how we teach. Ms. Call stressed that Education Renewal will facilitate a process of rethinking the high school experience and what the requirements should be for school completion (or graduation).

### 5.2.8 Aurora College: Connecting Communities of Learning

Heather McCagg-Nystrom, Vice President, Community and Extensions, Aurora College presented *Connecting Communities of Learning*.

Ms. McCagg-Nystrom provided an overview of Aurora College (AC). She indicated that AC averages over 500 full-time and between 2,000 and 3,000 part-time students. Most of the students are from the NWT and 75% are Aboriginal.

“Because we are the college of the Northwest Territories and the majority of our students are Aboriginal, traditional knowledge, language and culture are very important to us. “

- Heather McCagg-Nystrom, Vice President, Community and Extensions, Aurora College

She gave a synopsis of the various programs offered by AC, either through the three main campuses or through the 23 Community Learning Centres (CLC). Programming includes obtaining access, certificates, diplomas, degrees and apprenticeships, as well as general upgrading (Adult Literacy and Basic Education (ALBE)). Aurora College uses the Embedded Essential Skills Model (transferable skills) that offers opportunity to learn skills related to specific topic as well as embedded skills that are transferable, which ultimately provide Adult Learners with a “leg up” into the NWT workforce.

Ms. McCagg-Nystrom concluded her presentation by highlighting several of the positive outcomes and opportunities of the AC programs, while also recognizing challenges they are facing, such as sustainability, curriculum management and social housing.

### 5.2.9 Key Note – Importance of Aboriginal Inclusion in the Workforce

Kelly J. Lendsay, President and CEO, Aboriginal Human Resource Council, spoke on the *Importance of Aboriginal Inclusion in the Workforce*. He provided an overview of the Aboriginal Human Resource Council (AHRC) and the Seven Stage Inclusion Continuum that aims to improve the inclusion of Indigenous people in the workplace.

“Canada needs the North – not the other way around. “

- Kelly J. Lendsay, President and CEO, Aboriginal Human Resource Council

Mr. Lendsay summarized Kocihta, which is a national registered charity founded by AHRC, which is designed to help resolve the gap in Indigenous education and employment. Some of Kocihta's initiatives include: eMentoring, Leadership Skill Build, diagnostic tools,



My Way and Disabilities Research.

Mr. Lendsay stressed the importance of parents and communities ensuring kids go to school. He also noted that young people need to be exposed to career options. Youth need to see themselves in the workforce. He also reported that employers emphasize that applied skills like teamwork and critical thinking are very important to success at work and thus should be considered essential skills that we teach. Mr. Lendsay concluded his presentation with a poignant and thought-provoking video, entitled *Reason to Believe*.

### *5.2.10 Panel Discussion – Matching Skills with Jobs and Developing Skills to Create Jobs*

The symposium’s second panel discussion centred on the topic “Matching skills with jobs and developing skills to create jobs.” The panel members included:

- Andrew Fraser, Executive Vice President, Customer and External Relations, Finning International Inc.
- Cathie Bolstad, Executive Director, NWT Tourism
- Candace Morgan, Chief Human Resources Officer, Inuvialuit Regional Corporation
- Dave Brothers, President, NWT & Nunavut Construction Association
- Hilary Jones, General Manager, Mine Training Society NWT

#### *Question 1 – How can we better prepare people for employment opportunities?*

All panelists discussed the need to better market career opportunities and the skills they require to students at a younger age. They focused on the importance of getting young people excited about career options that exist in the NWT.

**“We need people to live, learn and lead in their communities – we need healthy families and healthy communities to be successful.”**

- Candace Morgan, Chief Human Resources Officer, Inuvialuit Regional Corporation

Mr. Brothers highlighted communicating trade apprenticeships and occupational certifications starting as early as grade seven. A large percentage of positions in NWT mines are filled by workers who don’t live in the NWT. We need to get the message out that these opportunities are here for our residents.

Mr. Fraser remarked on the importance of communicating that trades are exciting and not a ‘second tiered choice for those who can’t make it’. They are highly skilled, technical and in great demand worldwide with many career options. We need to educate teachers, parents and peers that trades are a great career.

Panelists recommended creating a skills inventory to better match those looking for work with jobs. Helping employers find workers would help address vacancies. Panelists noted the importance of engaging employers to understand what skills they need and creating training partnerships.

Mr. Brothers noted the importance of individual drive to seek out training opportunities and upgrade skills on an ongoing basis. Education, he remarked, is not “K to 12, it is K to grave”. The other panelists echoed similar sentiments of education as a lifelong commitment and the importance for individuals to take ownership over their career paths.

Question 2 – How do we better design our education and training systems to meet changing labour market needs?

All of the panelists agreed that it is important to provide employees with real-life training. They identified a need to equip the workforce with skills that will allow them to seize economic opportunities. There was specific mention of creating an economic and educational alliance and improving how we use national occupational standards to design NWT training programs.

Ms. Morgan identified a critical necessity to embed soft skills into postsecondary schooling and continue to develop these in the workplace. Entrepreneurs need to know about market-ready standards. Because the future is technology-driven, she stated that we have a responsibility to get young people engaged and oriented to what is technology. Ms. Jones shared a similar view highlighting the importance of skills training early on high school to better prepare young people for the workforce.

Mr. Fraser noted that employers also need to be engaged with the education system so that their needs are addressed. Employers need to partner with government and provide input into training programs and be willing to invest in their employees

Question 3 – In your experience, what strategies/innovation have worked well to help develop productivity or innovation?

Ms. Bolstad and Ms. Jones discussed the need for a shift in management culture. Employers need to give staff permission to be innovative, take risks and allow people to fail. Failure, they remarked, should be seen as a learning opportunity. Innovation means taking risks; there is a direct correlation between innovation and productivity.

“Innovation – freedom of expression (out-of-the-box thinking) is important.”

- Dave Brothers, President,  
NWT & Nunavut Construction Association

Ms. Morgan indicated that mentorship is critical but that the mentee must possess a willingness to accept a plan, be committed and be accountable. Accountability, she stated is important and it starts with leadership.

Mr. Fraser shared how the NWT can differentiate itself by focusing on productivity, safety and the environment in all of its projects. The Road to Tuktoyaktuk is one example that could be used as a training and skill development model to benefit local people and businesses. Mr. Fraser noted that employers need to have ‘skin in the game’. They need to be prepared to invest and share some of the risk.

5.2.11 Breakout Sessions – Input into the Development of a 10-year Strategic Framework

Breakout sessions on LMI, EES, SPSE, and RR were held concurrently over four time slots in the afternoons on Day 1 and Day 2 of the symposium. In each of the sessions, participants identified potential strategic framework goals, followed by action steps, outcomes, and lists of stakeholders to achieve the suggested goals. This section presents by domain themes raised during the breakout sessions.

#### 5.2.11.1 Labour Market Information

##### ***Increasing the Use of LMI***

During the breakout sessions, participants focused consistently on goals to increase the use, access and availability of LMI.

##### **'One stop window' for LMI**

A recurring theme was a need for a single portal or 'one stop window' for LMI. Making data available and easily accessible were considered critical for LMI to be actively used to shape career choices, inform business strategies, direct programs and services, and guide planning and resource allocation decisions. Participants noted that evidence informed decision making hinges on having data available and also knowing what the information tells us and how it can be used effectively. The need for easy access and community and regional level data were highlighted as priorities.

Participants identified key characteristics of a centralized LMI portal:

- Easy to use
- Timely
- Updated regularly
- Organized to reach different users (job seekers, employers, educators/trainers, policy makers)
- Reports regional and community level data
- Reports data by job sector
- Reports labour and economic forecast data
- Links to local data
- Includes a reviewer rater function to comment on data quality
- Allow users to compare data between regions and with NWT averages
- Includes more than Statistics Canada Census data
- Integrates with other GNWT efforts

Participants indicated that a single portal of information would increase access to LMI, empower users to make more informed choices, facilitate better matching of job needs and job skills, help build the business case for programs and services, help employers and entrepreneurs identify opportunities and provide insight into the economic landscape of regions and the NWT as a whole. The department responsible for developing the LMI portal should offer LMI training sessions for different audiences so they know how to use LMI and navigate the portal.

##### **Communicating LMI**

Participants recognized the importance for LMI to be plain language and communicated in ways to make it accessible. Increasing LMI literacy and learning how to use LMI is critical to building a practice of evidence informed decision making. Participants suggested developing an LMI communication and training plan to increase LMI literacy and share information.

One group suggested communicating new LMI data using different platforms to reach different audiences such as list serves, Facebook, Twitter, posters in career and education centres. The LMI data

should be plain language and indicate what it tells us, how it can be used and who may want to know the information. LMI facts could be targeted to different audiences.

### ***Data Collection Mechanisms and Sharing***

Participants strongly articulated the need to coordinate data collection efforts and to develop new collection methods in order to improve community level LMI. The lack of community data could be addressed by developing streamlined data collection tools and easy to use reporting templates. The process, it was noted, must first begin with a discussion about LMI priorities.

### ***Investing in Data Support Systems***

Several groups noted that government departments, institutions and private sector organizations need to make an investment in LMI data collection tools. The Aurora College Student Record System, for example, was identified as being out of date and difficult to use. A new system would make student record retrieval easier and quicker. New systems should be tied into accountability frameworks. The development of NWT guidelines could support synchronistic systems between institutions and organizations.

Participants noted that a lot of LMI is already tracked but not shared due to privacy concerns. Coordinating what is being collected and what has been collected will advance a process toward developing more formalized data collection and sharing mechanisms. The increased time and effort placed on program managers and service providers to collect and report data was cited as a concern.

Developing sharing agreements and Memoranda of Understanding between government departments, agencies, Aboriginal governments and private industry were noted as a hurdle that will need to be overcome for wider sharing of administrative and program data. It was more broadly remarked that the willingness to share is not there, especially between levels of government and within the private sector.

One group suggested creating data collection teams employed as summer students to collect community based data across the NWT. The students would receive job experience, data collection training and support the development of an LMI inventory.

It was also suggested that the NWT adopt an education and career pathway identifier. It was described as a student number you get when you start school and keep throughout your working years. The personal identifier would track career interests, educational attainment, training courses, and professional development programs to help understand the success of education and training programs and types of jobs people are finding. The identifier could also be used to help match job availability to skillsets and inform individuals of employment and education supports and upcoming training.

### ***Helping People find Careers and Jobs***

A number of groups highlighted the need for LMI to be practical and concentrate on helping people find careers and jobs. Groups indicated the importance of communicating plain language job and career information to help those seeking employment find work and help employers fill vacancies. Other groups identified the need to help people understand the training and education required to attain careers in fields of interest as a priority.

Participants offered suggestions of LMI necessary to help people find careers and jobs including:

- Careers/job options at a community, regional, territorial level
- Job descriptions
- Salaries and advancement opportunities
- Skills and education needed to access career/jobs
- Where/how you attain training/education to meet entry requirements
- Future career prospects by region, NWT (labour forecasts)

One group suggested surveying job seekers to identify what types of information they want and where they go to find information. LMI targeting job seekers, they noted, must be plain language. Another action item cited by a number of groups was to develop plain language definitions of 'LMI' terms and standardized definitions for skillsets and job requirements. We also heard the need for a service or centralized system that connects the skills of job seekers with job vacancies. If employers automatically received a list of potential applicants it could help fill vacancies quicker and better match people with jobs. Numerous participants noted the effectiveness of the Jobs North website, which was replaced by Canada Job Bank. It was noted that through this type of portal, LMI information could be collected and communicated.

#### ***Building Career Pathways Early On***

Career and job information, it was noted, should be presented to students in junior high and high schools to expose students to potential career pathways early on. Young people need to know steps to be successful and what options are available to them. Numerous participants highlighted the importance of career dreaming. To support the process of helping young people identify careers, guidance counsellors and career support workers need to have basic knowledge and understanding of LMI and how to use it effectively. We also heard that more classroom visits showcasing different career options is needed. Where possible, visitors should be from the community or region. Students should also be supported to develop 'roadmaps' to understand what education and training they will need to get to where they want to go. One group suggested introducing a weekly career spotlight in junior high and high schools (grades seven and up) showcasing a possible career and a pathway to that career.

#### ***Complementary Information Sources***

A group of participants cautioned to remember limitations of LMI. The notion that LMI trumps other forms of information was also challenged by some. For example, it was discussed that we should not rule out the value of experience and on the ground conversations.

Some participants questioned the value of collecting and reporting community level data given the limitations (timeliness, high costs, accuracy). One participant remarked that communities are aware of the unemployment rate and job prospects without needing official data to tell them. Information exchange through partnerships and improving communication with different levels of government, educators and employers was suggested as a better way to gauge the economy and labour markets at a community level.

In respect to individual career paths, a respondent remarked that self-assessment and awareness are key to choosing a career path not how many plumbing jobs are available. Other respondents commented that building a vibrant workforce and economy is about educating people to develop their capacity to work and follow their career dreams.

#### 5.2.11.2 Education and Employment Supports

##### ***Awareness of Employment Supports***

Goals were framed around the need to increase awareness of education and employment supports (EES). There was a strong sense among group participants that many employers and students did not know what supports were available or how to access them. Several groups suggested creating a user friendly web portal that lists education and employment supports by community and region and provides guidance on how to access programs. It was suggested the portal could be connected with an LMI portal.

To increase awareness, groups identified the need for a coordinated outreach plan and the development of service pathway maps. Targeting communication approaches to different audiences (students, job seekers and employers) was cited as being critical. One group noted the importance of thinking beyond the career fair model when trying to reach smaller communities. To reach employers, groups suggested communicating EES through Chambers of Commerce and other business and industry networks. EES breakout groups felt better awareness would increase the use of programs and services, increase employment and help jobseekers and students enter the workforce.

##### ***EES Review***

Several goals were framed around the need to deliver effective education and employment supports based on a review of existing programs to ensure relevancy and value. Establishing program metrics and performance indicators were identified as an option to track program effectiveness. Numerous groups suggested the need to develop a business case for existing programs and streamlining service delivery between the various providers (ECE, ITI, Aurora College, ASETS, MACA). Some groups noted training program decisions and investments need to be backed by LMI. It was also suggested to conduct a gap analysis and program needs assessment to align funding with needs. Many groups noted the importance of developing partnerships and flexible training models to meet specific community and regional needs. Groups also noted the importance of identifying mechanisms for ongoing review and relevancy of programs. Participants noted the outcomes of an EES review would be improved service delivery, reduced duplication, more flexible program delivery and better use of funding.

##### ***Education and Employment Gap***

Many groups recognized the need to close the education and employment gaps between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations. Working groups suggested steps addressing systemic challenges such as providing cultural awareness programs and residential school awareness to employers and educators. They also suggested improving education supports and creating jobs in communities. Examples of specific steps listed were: support accreditation of transferable skills, build on existing, review social supports such as housing, childcare and SFA, prioritize job growth and investment in the regions, and

ensure local workers are considered first for employment. It was believed addressing gaps in education and employment would increase employment in communities, reduce reliance on social assistance and increase educational outcomes.

#### ***Targeted Education and Employment Supports***

Groups identified various goals to expand supports to specific groups or sectors. For example, increasing wage subsidies to support small businesses and increasing employer training incentives were cited by multiple groups. Groups also noted goals to increase supports for marginalized groups such as disabled persons, older workers, those exiting the criminal justice system and homeless people.

#### ***Disincentives to employment***

Many groups listed as a goal or step the need to remove disincentives to employment. Issues specific to housing and income assistance were identified. Loss of public housing when you leave a community to access training or for employment was highlighted by several groups. One group recommended a review of income assistance and other social support subsidies to understand which encourage self-efficacy and which foster dependency. Groups also noted a need shift how we think about unemployment. It should be seen as a transition from one job to another and not as a permanent state.

#### ***Youth Experience Outside the NWT***

Many groups identified as a goal or action item a need to increase youth experiences outside the NWT. Actions suggested around this theme include: develop and foster a northern youth abroad program; develop an Aboriginal exchange program; support learning trips out of the NWT starting in junior high; and expose students when on school trips to colleges, universities, and career options.

### 5.2.11.3 Skills and Postsecondary Education

#### ***Training and Educational Opportunities***

Many of the goals identified by break out groups in the SPSE sessions focused on offering new or more frequent educational and training opportunities for a specific field or job sector.

#### ***IT training***

Several groups identified the need to expand IT (information technology) training. The goal was framed around a need to participate in the global economy and as an approach to diversify economic opportunities in the NWT. To advance IT training, participants suggested that Aurora College partner with accredited universities to develop laddering programs and that the Department of ITI focus on attracting high tech industries and research centres to the NWT. Improving internet connectivity was cited as a critical step.

#### ***Business training***

Expanding different aspects of business training was a frequently cited goal. Some groups singled out training for small businesses in particular to support accounting and HR. Other groups suggested expanding the Aurora College business program and business related programs offered by the MACA School for Community Government.

### **Industry related skills training**

Groups identified various goals referencing the need to expand industry related skills training to increase northern employment in the mining sector and reduce dependency on a Southern fly-in workforce. Participants stressed that training should include knowledge and skills but also attributes to be successful on the job, for example, safety standards, workplace norms and job readiness. It was noted to include industry experts in curriculum design to ensure training reflects job requirements and employer expectations.

### **Apprenticeship training**

Groups identified goals aimed to increase the number of apprentices in the NWT. Many steps focused on supporting students in apprenticeship programs such as offering academic supports (tutoring and peer support) and increasing financial supports. Other steps focused on increasing the profile of apprenticeship training and retaining apprentices in the North. Examples include: promoting the trades as a great career choice; offering training in more regional centres; increasing the number of journeypersons; and, creating incentives for graduates to work and live in the NWT.

### **Qualified journeypersons in NWT**

A closely related goal focused on the need to increase the number of journeypersons in the NWT especially in small communities. Participants noted reevaluating the apprenticeship training program and wage subsidy rates as opportunities to increase uptake. One group suggested introducing tele-apprenticeship and online apprenticeship learning. Another group suggested developing a program to engage retired trades people to take on apprentices.

### **On-the-land accredited training and education opportunities**

Groups identified expanding Dechinta Centre for Research and Learning and offering on-the-land educational opportunities to high school students and marginalized groups (e.g., persons with disabilities, parolees) as goals. Steps include: validating credentials of instructors (elders, land users); introducing legislative change to accredit a land based educational institute; and, re-assessing SFA policies to support those attending land based education programs. Participants notes that more on-the-land training would increase the number of northerners with University degrees, build practical knowledge and skills, restore cultural identity and values, and promote economic self-sufficiency.

### **Training and supports to expand the traditional skills economy**

Two groups framed goals around the need to offer training and supports to expand the traditional economy and capitalize on existing skills in communities. Training could focus on running a small business, connecting with markets and developing eco-tourism. To achieve these related goals, participants suggested creating inventories of skills in communities, having elders mentor youth in traditional skills, creating partnerships with markets, arts councils and the tourism industry, and providing grants and zero interest loans to small businesses. Participants felt expanding the traditional skills economy would foster local economic resilience, build community pride, increase the number of small businesses and reduce dependency on income assistance.



### **Entrepreneurship**

Several goals and steps suggested in the LMI breakout sessions highlighted support for entrepreneurs. Suggestions ranged from offering entrepreneurship training to offering financial supports and tax incentives. Participants felt fostering entrepreneurial spirit would drive community economic growth, increase the number of successful small business, and help diversify the NWT economy.

### ***Expanding the Reach of Training and Education Programs***

Expanding the reach of training and educational programs by offering programs in more communities or by using different learning platforms was a common goal identified by groups.

### **Online learning programs**

Offering online education and training options was cited frequently as a goal to improve the reach of education and training programs. The development of online programming was identified as a potential solution to increase access to programs in smaller communities, allow people to stay in communities, accommodate learners with families and jobs and support those who require a more flexible learning style. Several steps were identified to increase the availability of online learning programs notably improve connectivity and IT support across the NWT, equip learning centres with IT supports (video conferencing, software, equipment etc.), establish an online department within Aurora College, connect and partner with colleges and universities offering online programs, develop networks to support online learners (mentoring forums, online tutoring) and change SFA rules so students enrolled in online programs can access funding.

### **Deployment of technology simulated training solutions**

The idea of embracing technology solutions to expand training options in smaller communities was suggested by a number of groups. Some oil and gas and resource extraction training can be done using simulated training technologies. Either all or a portion of the training could be offered in a community. Partnering with industry and the Mine Training Society (MTS) to deliver programming were identified as an important step.

### **MACA Community School of Government**

Participants suggested expanding the reach of the MACA Community School of Government by offering more programs and reducing costs to make them more accessible to non-government participants. MACA's strong connection with communities and successful delivery approach were cited as models to replicate for other training and education programs. It was also suggested to create a partnership structure with Aurora College and other training agencies to reduce duplication and pool resources to better deliver programming and services.

### ***Transition from High School to Postsecondary Training, Education and Employment***

The SPSE breakout session groups identified many goals focused on improving the transition from high school to postsecondary training, education and employment. Remarks highlighted the need to prepare students in high school for entry and success in postsecondary education and employment opportunities. Goals and steps targeted several recurrent themes including: teach life skills and job readiness skills in high school; integrate work placements into high school curriculum and college

programs; offer summer programs for students to try trades; provide safety training, WHMIS, hospitality and food handling training in high school; partner with businesses to discuss career options and job skills with students; and, increase incentives for employers to hire students. As a result of the respective actions, groups envisioned confident graduates ready to succeed in the workplace.

### **Exposure to career options**

Another dimension raised by many groups around improving the transition from high school to postsecondary education and employment was the need to make young people aware of career options early on. Strategies to do so include: offer career planning and counselling at an earlier age; encourage career dreaming; offer job shadowing and summer student employment opportunities; and facilitate college and employer workplace tours.

### **Social passing**

A recurring sub-issue identified by several groups was a call to end social passing. It was stated that social passing creates a disservice to students and employers. The practice can set up young people for failure in postsecondary education and employment opportunities compromising self-esteem and future success. It was also cited as being very frustrating for employers who have an expectation of high school standards that often are not met because of social passing.

### **Funding**

Funding issues were frequently raised in association with goals and actions. Issues focused on improving access to funding, allocating funding to support program expansion ideas, capitalizing on funding partnerships and streamlining funding mechanisms in an effort to identify cost efficiencies.

### **Free postsecondary education for NWT residents**

Offering free postsecondary education was identified as a goal that would create a more educated workforce, increase access to postsecondary education and reduce social problems. To support the goal, group participants listed researching models where education is free, conducting a socio-economic study to determine the true costs and benefits of free postsecondary education and connecting the program back to working in the NWT.

### **SFA funding model**

Participants identified a need to revise the SFA funding model. Issues highlighted include:

- Change funding requirements to allow more than 1 year of academic upgrading
- Offer remissible loans for trades to incentivise working in the NWT
- Investigate funding supports for creative learning opportunities
- Investigate funding supports for traditional educational programs
- Change funding rules to support Masters and PhD funding

### **System Change**

Many goals focused on rethinking how skills and postsecondary education are organized and delivered. Goals around system change tended to be high level such as develop a coordinated postsecondary education and skills system, create efficient and cost effective delivery mechanisms or streamline

programs and services. Under the goals, groups identified more specific steps to foster the type of change they believe is needed. Many of the actions listed focused on reviewing the effectiveness of current programs and supports to eliminate duplication and programs with poor outcomes and developing training that corresponds with community needs. More strongly stated actions included eliminate all programs for which there is no business case for offering them. Some groups suggested overhauling the model entirely by downloading training dollars and responsibility to community training committees, outsourcing training to private enterprise or by splitting up Aurora College into three streams to better reflect training and education needs of the NWT (ALBE, Trades and Training (similar to NAIT), academic stream). Fostering partnerships and streamlining funding and resources were identified as being critical to improving system efficiency. Several groups also noted that systemic change will require strong leadership and political will.

### ***Community Relevance***

Some groups identified goals which addressed the need to deliver education and training programs that were community focused and relevant to community's needs. Participants suggested developing community based governance structures and training strategies. It was suggested training strategies should consider an inventory of community skills, availability of community and regional jobs and economic and labour forecasts. Other action items focused on more appropriate training approaches including offering culturally relevant training courses, training course that have practical relevance and promoting more inclusive teaching styles. Developing flexible learning modules and shorter courses were cited as strategies to increase student success.

#### **5.2.11.4 Recruitment and Retention**

### ***NWT is Great Place to Live***

Groups suggested various goals to communicate NWT as a great place to live, raise a family, work and do business. Steps suggested include: capitalize on the 'Come Make your Mark' campaign and 'Spectacular NWT'; address concerns around housing, high cost of living, safety, connectivity and schools; and partner with employers to communicate a consistent message. Participants also suggested actions to welcome newcomers such as developing community welcome programs to support people new to the NWT, establishing a newcomer network, and connecting new families with a support family. To better understand why people leave, participants suggested developing a workforce exit survey.

### ***Retention of Professionals in Hard to Fill Positions***

Retention, generally, and retaining professionals in hard to fill positions, more specifically, were commonly listed goals. In addition to addressing broader retention challenges around housing and high cost of living, participants suggested steps such as: prioritizing workplace wellness, establishing respectful and safe workplace policies, creating professional networks and personal support networks (in person or online), providing support structures for families, introducing flex-time options to support work-life balance, advocating for taxation reform and offering incentives to support home ownership. Participants believed higher retention rates would reduce recruitment costs, lead to higher productivity, foster economic and institutional stability, and strengthen social capital.

### ***Employee Training and Professional Development***

Many groups identified goals to increase employee training and professional development. The emphasis focused on employers actively investing in the development of employees as an opportunity to increase employee retention and fill job openings from within. Action items ascribed to these goals include:

- conduct needs assessment of employee training;
- develop employee learning plans and career growth pathways;
- mobilize GNWT and external funding dollars to provide training;
- reduce red tape and streamline applications for employment supports;
- support/ establish professional networks;
- establish mentorship programs (especially for those entering management positions);
- offer job shadowing secondments; and,
- integrate training and professional development as a component of HR planning.

Potential outcomes of increased training could be, more capable and dedicated employees, increased job satisfaction, higher retention rates, greater ability to fill jobs from within and retention of corporate/ institutional knowledge.

### ***Hiring Process***

Some groups suggested goals around improving the GNWT hiring process. It was suggested that the process needs to be open, inclusive and transparent. To improve the hiring process, groups suggested: changing the interview process so applicants have the questions in advance; providing information on the interview process so it is less intimidating; and, being transparent about how employers came to the hiring decision. Transparency and accountability is especially important in smaller communities. Participants felt revising the hiring process would create trust in the GNWT hiring process, create an even playing field among interviewees, reduce stress among interviewees and increase the number of successful hires.

### ***Recruitment Targets***

Recruitment target goals focused on hiring more Aboriginal people into the workforce and prioritizing NWT hires. To achieve these goals participants identified action items directed at employers and action items addressing GNWT policies and practices.

Employers:

- increase cross cultural awareness;
- create flexibility so positions can support those wishing to retain traditional lifestyle practices;
- adjust job requirements to reflect existing skills and non-formalized education;
- provide training to match people to positions;
- establish a wage subsidy for employers who hire IA or EI qualified applicants; and,
- expand pick up points for mine workers in the NWT.

GNWT policies and practices:

- shift more GNWT positions to communities;
- revise hiring policies to strengthen the commitment to hire NWT residents first;
- enforce hiring policies;
- change interview process (see above);
- restrict travel support and Edmonton drop off for fly-in/fly-out workers; and,
- track success of recruitment and retention programs.

Respective groups believed the proposed recruitment targets would increase employment and economic opportunities in communities, reduce the employment gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations and reduce the reliance on fly-in/ fly-out workers and southern recruits.

### ***Employment in Mines***

Goals to increase NWT residents working in the mines focused on training and education and developing support systems for workers and their families. Recommended steps targeting training and education included: incorporate mining education in grades 7-12 curriculum; promote mining as a good career; promote diversity of mining jobs (clerical staff, mechanics, trades people, cooks, engineers, geologists); provide community based training; work with MTS to expand programming; and support professional development of mine employees so they can advance from entry level positions.

Steps to increase support systems addressed challenges that a two week in/ two week out lifestyle can have on workers and families. Suggestions included: establish parent and partner networks to support families of mine workers, provide childcare supports to help worker's partners and offer flexibility to participate in traditional lifestyle practices.

#### **5.2.11.5 Overlap Issues**

Numerous issues were raised consistently across domain areas. While the issues have direct bearing on the Skills 4 Success Initiative, they are broader issues challenging the NWT and not specific to education, training, recruitment, retention or labour market development. Addressing these issues, however, are important to support the larger Skills 4 Success vision and building a vibrant NWT workforce.

### ***Housing Issues***

The importance of available, affordable, and adequate housing as being vital to recruitment and retention efforts was identified frequently. Housing was also identified as a factor limiting the willingness of some to relocate for education and training and employment. Overcrowded housing, inadequate housing, and safety in the home were cited as factors which influence learning and ability to succeed in the workplace. It was noted that advancing an S4S agenda will be limited without addressing housing challenges. Ideas put forth by participants to address the broader housing challenge were to develop a NWT housing strategy and creating a territorial taskforce to review public housing and residential incentives.

### ***Childcare***

Providing access to affordable childcare was consistently identified in steps across numerous goals. The lack of childcare was identified as a barrier to accessing education and training and seeking

employment. Participants recommended developing a childcare mandate as an important first step toward addressing a chronic shortage of affordable childcare across the NWT.

### ***Healthy Communities***

The importance of healthy communities was identified as a precursor to education and employment success. Groups across breakout sessions connected various goals and action items to issues of nutrition, shelter, personal safety and residential schools. The notions of infant to elder and womb to tomb were discussed in the context of all life stages being important to education and employment success and in the context that learning happens over an entire lifespan.

### ***Stereotypes***

A need to break stereotypes was identified as a step under many goals across domains. Persistent stereotypes around education and the workforce in the NWT have negative societal implications and undermine opportunities for success. Prevalent stereotypes requiring change highlighted by participants include:

- More education means losing your culture
- Aboriginal people are unreliable workers
- The Northern workforce is unqualified
- Schools and the education system in the NWT are inferior to schools in the South
- Trades are a secondary option for those who are not able get into college or university

Collectively we need to communicate that these stereotypes are false and misrepresent the NWT.

### ***The Path Forward***

Many groups as part of the break-out session exercises reflected on goals and action items in the context of moving the S4S Initiative forward.

### ***'Strategic' Connections***

Participants noted that strategic documents need to reinforce one another and chart a clear path forward. Many action items across goals and domains identified the importance to connect the Skills 4 Success Initiative to the Education Renewal and Innovation Initiative (ERI). Participants recognized the pathway of learning starts as an infant. Skills 4 Success, participants remarked, flows from strong K-12 programming and early childhood education. Participants also reported the importance to connect the S4S Initiative with the Economic Opportunities Strategy and other economic growth plans and programs.

### ***Culture of Education***

Groups under a number of goals reported that charting a path forward begins with building a culture of education. It was suggested for education to be a top priority requires parents, elders, and community leaders to trust the education system and for those respective groups to communicate the value of education to children. Various groups connected a culture of education to fostering hope, options and career dreaming in young people. It was noted that building a culture of education requires a systemic change in how education is perceived at a household level and among leaders.

### ***Courageous Leadership***

Several groups identified bold and courageous leadership as essential to move a meaningful agenda forward. While groups singled out ECE, they also noted the importance of collaborative leadership coming from the Premier and Ministers, community leadership, and private sector leadership. One group noted that courageous leadership embraces creativity, innovation and is not afraid of failure or change.

### ***Reporting Progress***

Participants were clear that they wanted to see results. To hold leadership accountable, they noted the need for ECE to report on progress and seek ongoing input. Participants also indicated that it is okay to get pieces of it wrong. Several participants stressed that the upcoming strategic framework must be embraced as a living document that is flexible and open to change. Participants suggested hosting a symposium every two years to report on progress, re-evaluate direction, and reengage stakeholders. Using the web site to share updates and communicating directly with partners and regions were cited as important communication steps.

#### **5.2.11.6 Inspirational Messages**

Breakout groups peppered worksheets with inspirational messages acknowledging the importance of vision and hope in charting a new course. Many of the messages conveyed the importance of sharing hope with children and our capacity to lead and make a difference in people's lives.

- "Create footprints that give young people opportunities and hope."
- "Convey hope in your work. For children to imagine a bright future, they must see options."
- "Seize the moment and do things different. We have been given the mandate."
- "Success is having the ability to be anything you want to be and the supports and pathways to do so."
- "Move forward with courage to have the tough conversations. If not, we are just spending a lot of money rearranging chairs on the deck."
- "Create footprints for others to walk in. Walk with excellence and integrity."
- "S4S is about our children and the future of our Territory."
- "What you don't say or don't do matters as much as what you do say and do."
- "Realize the incredible power of simple acts in making a difference in the career path and success of an individual."
- "Set aside fear of change."
- "Focus on can dos as opposed to can not's."

#### **5.2.12 Closing Remarks**

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Mr. Andy Bevan, ECE's Assistant Deputy Minister of Labour and Income Security closed the symposium by highlighting some of the "great things" that he had heard from symposium participants:

- Importance of relevant and reliable labour market information – plain language and accessible,
- Evidence-based decision-making,
- Seamless path for learners,

- Developing and supporting entrepreneurship,
- Mentorship,
- Leveraging technology – online learning,
- Portal for information/resources,
- Employing social media and communications,
- Opportunities for youth outside home communities, and
- Access to effective leadership and life skills.

Mr. Bevan indicated that there are many steps still to take, including an engagement report and the Strategic Framework for moving forward.

### 5.3 Online Survey

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The final engagement piece was an online survey that was open from February 26 to April 10, 2015. The survey was designed to assess the experiences of multiple stakeholder groups, including Students, Job Seekers, Education/Training Providers, Employers, Employees, and Retired Persons. The goal of the survey was to give the opportunity to as broad of an audience as possible to express their opinions on issues related to the four pillars of Skills 4 Success. Each stakeholder group was asked questions most appropriate to their situation. In this way, we were able to capture information related to LMI, EES, SPSE and RR from a variety of perspectives. Key themes and findings from the survey are presented below.<sup>2</sup>

#### 5.3.1 Labour Market Information

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From the educator/trainer perspective, the most helpful types of labour market information include the education and skill requirements for particular jobs (86%), the types of jobs most in demand (82%), and the location of job opportunities (77%). Still important, but slightly less so, were job wage levels (60%) and necessary years of experience (46%). The “Other” category offered some insight into other helpful sorts of information, including what sorts of supports are available to help students achieve necessary job qualifications.

Among those who are currently employed, the types of labour market information that most influenced their career paths include skills and education required to qualify for particular jobs (49%), the location of employment opportunities (45%), and wages that different jobs pay (28%).

Employers were asked what LMI they would find helpful in an open ended question format. Many wrote about the necessity of understanding the labour demands of the NWT as a whole – and matching those demands to the available training programs and supports. Employers were also eager to better understand the types of training and supports that are available to their employees.

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<sup>2</sup> Due to the low response rate for the Job Seeker/Unemployed and Retired Persons surveys, the bulk of the data presented is from the Student, Educator/Trainer, Employee and Employer surveys.

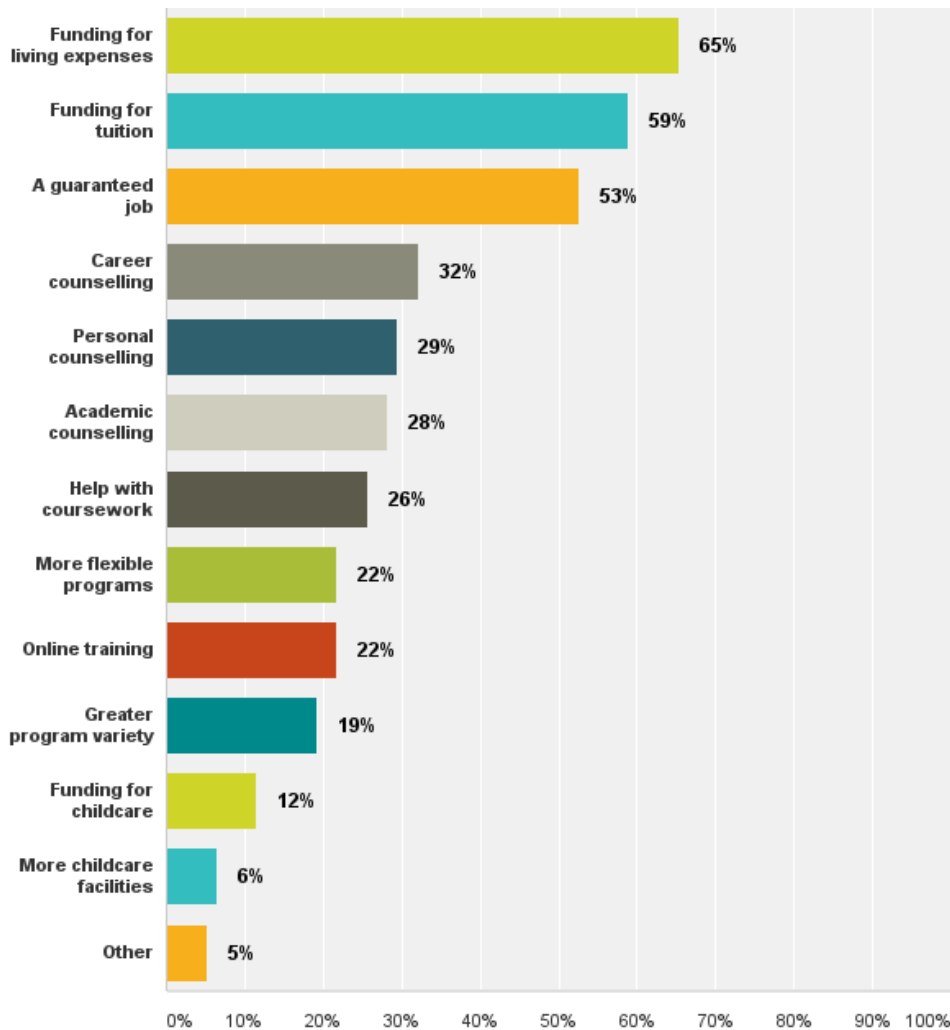


5.3.2 Education and Employment Supports

5.3.2.1 Supports for Education and Training

Current students/trainees were most interested in financial supports. The two most popular responses were additional funding for living expenses (65%) and additional funding for tuition (59%). These responses were closely followed by a guaranteed job upon graduation (53%) (Figure 5). It is clear that these factors were the most critical to students, as when asked what the **most** important support would be, the pattern was the same. Beyond financial assistance, counselling was clearly in demand, with academic (28%), career (32%), and personal wellness counselling (29%) all being popular options. These were followed by variations in how the training/education is offered, including additional help with coursework (26%), more flexible programs (22%), online training (22%), and greater program variety (19%). Factors that were not as significant included additional funding for childcare and more childcare facilities. We do not know, however, the number of respondents with young children.

Figure 2: Supports desired by current students/trainees



From the educator/trainer perspective, childcare was seen as substantially more important, with over 60% of respondents indicating that additional childcare facilities (66%) and additional funding for childcare (62%) would impact students'/trainees' ability to stay in school or return to school to a great extent. There was also a strong emphasis on improved counselling, particularly personal counselling for such issues as health, wellness, or assistance with personal and family problems, with 65% indicating that this would impact ability to stay in or return to education/training to a great extent.

Educators/trainers seconded the notion that students could use additional funding for living expenses (41%) and tuition (35%), and saw the value in the offer of a guaranteed job upon graduation (45%).<sup>3</sup> Educators/trainers further identified increased program flexibility (45%) and an improved offering of the variety of courses (42%) as important factors.<sup>4</sup>

Educators/trainers were asked what the best ways were to ensure that more people take advantage of skills training and postsecondary education opportunities in their community. A frequent suggestion was that the education/training be paired with an available job upon completion. Others suggested that more promotion and advertising of programs is necessary. A number of individuals also felt that it was critical for personal supports to be in place (such as child care or addictions counselling) before students/trainees participate in a program. The same question was posed to retirees, who provided some similar suggestions, including additional advertising and ensuring the availability of jobs. Some also suggested the need for mentors or career counsellors who could motivate and encourage youth.

### **5.3.2.2 Supports for Career Development**

Educators and trainers were asked what supports they felt would most likely help their students/trainees to find employment. The most common responses related to resume building and interview skills workshops. Many also felt that students/trainees could use training in life skills and living independently. It was suggested that more summer work opportunities and mentorship/apprenticeship programs would help to bridge the gap between education and employment.

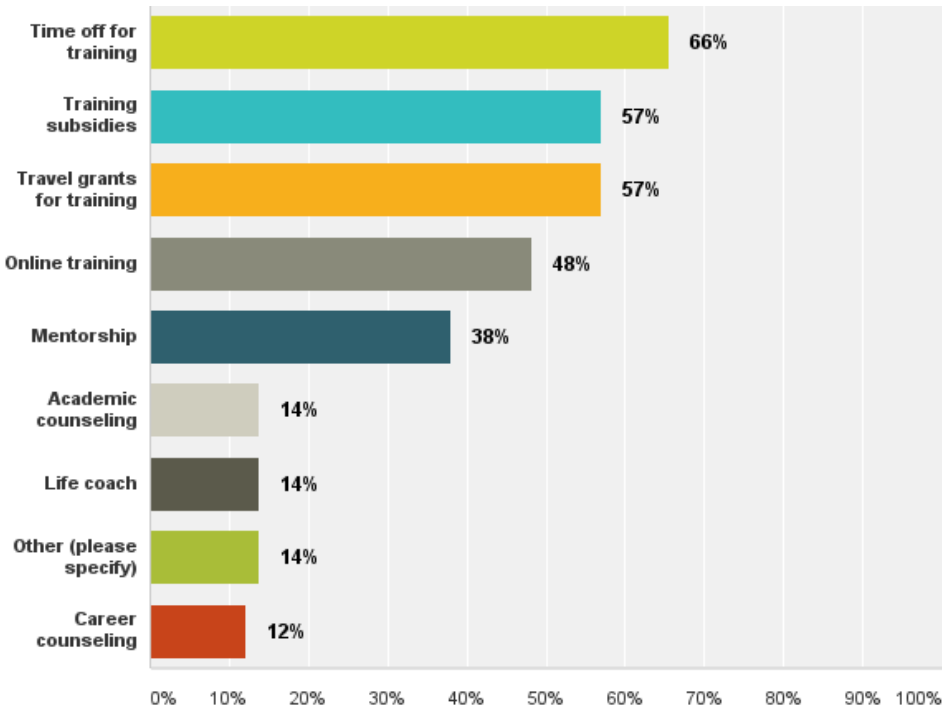
Among those who are currently employed, the opportunity to pursue further training is seen as very important for career development. When asked what professional development supports would help them to advance their career aspirations, time off from employer to support training (66%), training and education subsidies (57%), travel grants to support training (57%), and access to online training opportunities (48%) were the most popular responses (Figure 6).

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<sup>3</sup> Percentages indicate proportion of respondents who felt the factor would impact students/trainees ability to stay in or return to school to "a great extent".

<sup>4</sup> Percentages indicate proportion of respondents who felt the factor would impact students/trainees ability to stay in or return to school to "a great extent".

Figure 3: Career development supports desired by current employees



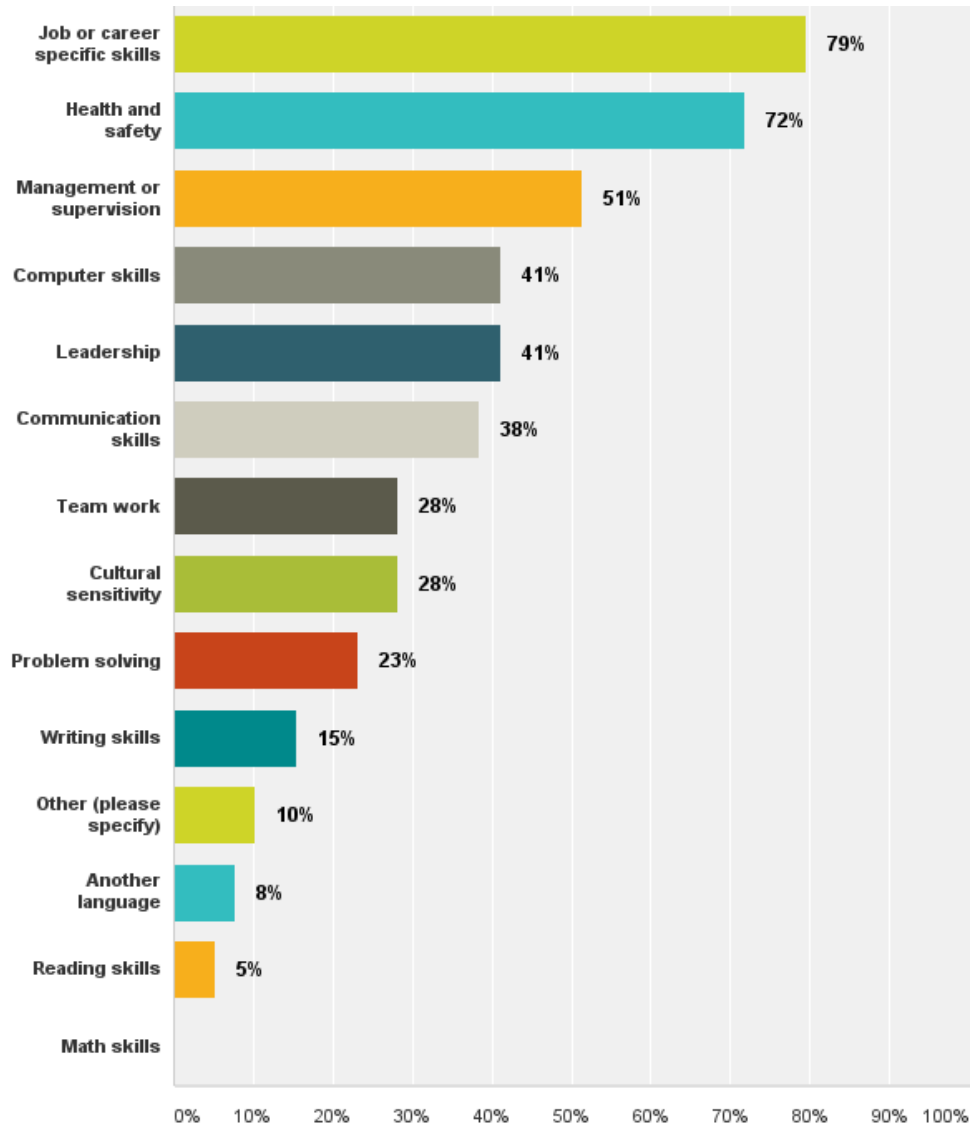
Among job seekers, respondents indicated that the career support they most frequently utilized was an online job search tool (77%). Career counselling (38%) and advice from a family member or mentor (38%) was sought somewhat less frequently.

**5.3.2.3 Employer Supported Education and Training**

Employers indicated that they are supportive of providing training opportunities for their employees. According to the survey results, 82% of employers provided classroom training, workshops or seminars for at least some of their employees in the past year. Training was offered most often to those in managerial and administrative occupations (67%), technical and paraprofessional occupations (51%), professional occupations (46%), and clerical and administrative support occupations (46%).

The types of training offered by employers covered a wide range of topics. The most frequently offered types of training included job or career specific skills (79%), workplace health and safety (72%), management or supervision training (51%), and computer skills (41%) (Figure 7). It appears that literacy skills training was offered rarely if at all: writing skills (15%); reading skills (5%); math skills (0%).

Figure 4: Types of training offered by employers



Employers were asked if they thought that businesses have a responsibility to help support the development of skills and postsecondary education efforts in their employees. Nearly every employer agreed with this statement (98%). Employers were further asked about ways in which businesses could offer this support. Many suggestions were provided, including funding for training, paid time off for employees to attend training, in house training and mentorship programs, and rewarding employees when they complete a program.

Employers were also asked what they believed the government could do to better support training and education in the NWT. Two popular answers were (1) offering a wider range of courses at schools and colleges in the NWT and (2) finding ways to encourage youth to stay in school. Some also suggested tying education to some form of incentive, whether an associated job or an incentive payment.

5.3.3 Skills and Post-Secondary Education

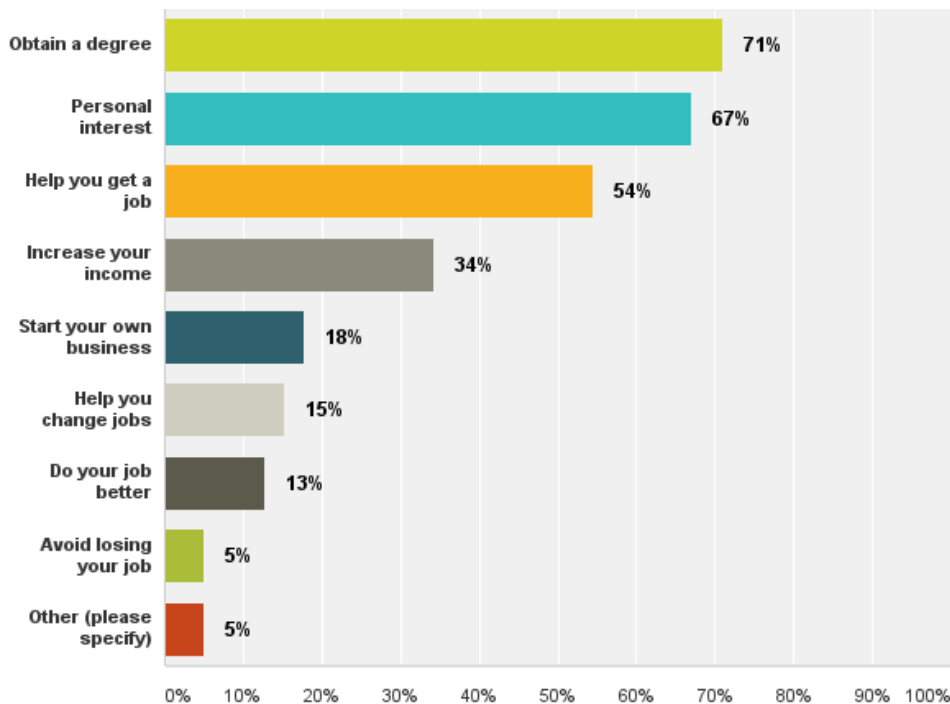
5.3.3.1 Information on Education

Students/trainees most often reported getting information on educational and training opportunities on-line (75%) and through word of mouth (49%). Twenty percent of students/trainees reported getting this information through academic counselling.

5.3.3.2 Motivation to Pursue Training and Education

Among those currently enrolled in training/education programs, the most popular reason for it is to obtain a degree, certificate or diploma (71%) (Figure 2). The next most frequent responses, in order of popularity, include personal interest (67%), to help get a job (54%), and to increase income (34%).

Figure 5: Students'/trainees' reasons for taking training/program

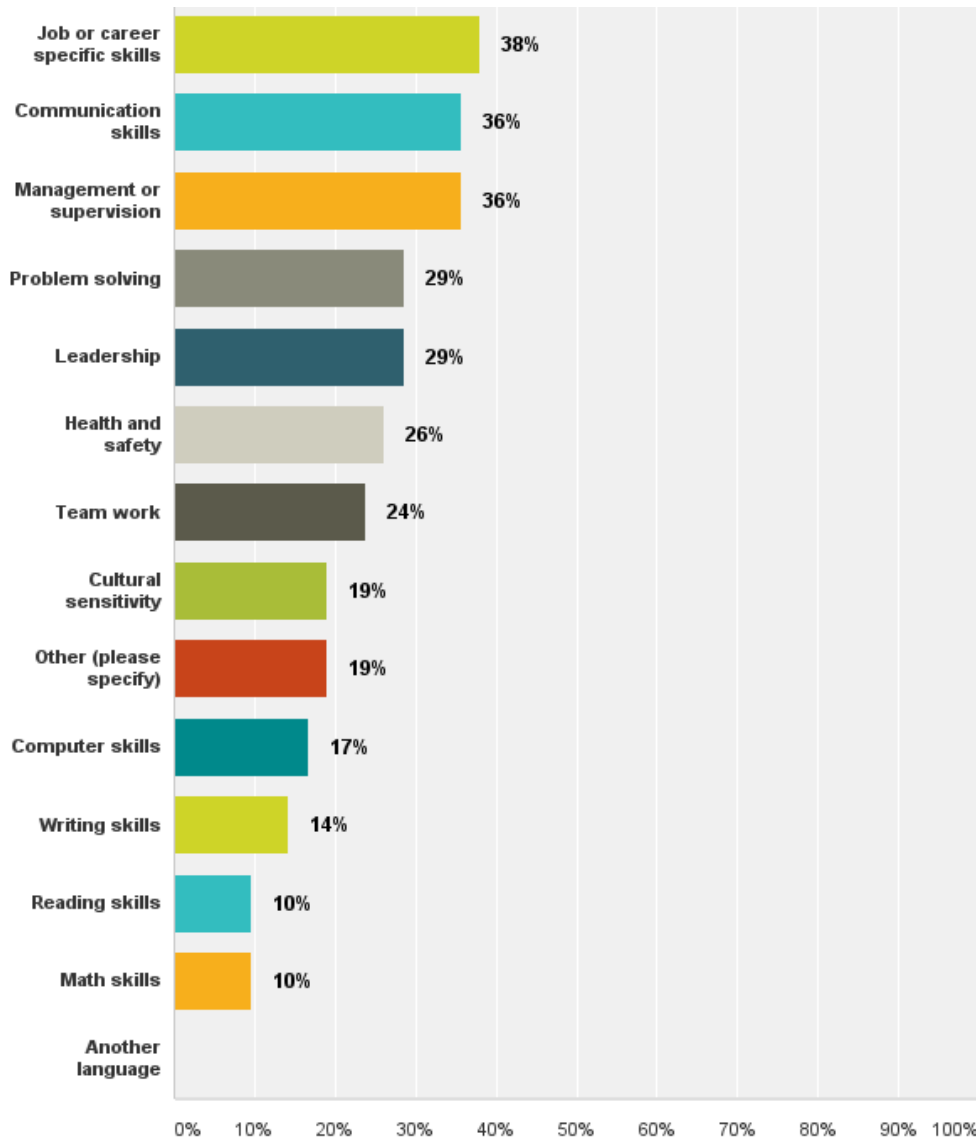


5.3.3.3 Education/Training for Current Employees

Among current employees, 61% indicated that they had taken a course, seminar, workshop or training related to a current or future job in the past 12 months. Of those who received some form of training, 38% indicated that it was provided by their employer, while 42% indicated that it was provided by a College or University. Further, 52% indicated that the training was provided during working hours, 24% indicated that the training was provided outside of working hours, and 24% received training both inside and outside of working hours. The most popular reason for taking some form of training was personal interest (57%), followed closely by “Looking for advancement opportunity (promotion or career development)” (45%), “Requirement of employment (including professional association, legal

requirement, collective agreement)” (45%), and “Do your job better” (45%). The types of training received covered a wide range of topics, the most common being job or career specific skills (38%), communication skills (36%), and management or supervision (36%) (Figure 3).

**Figure 6: Subject of employee training**

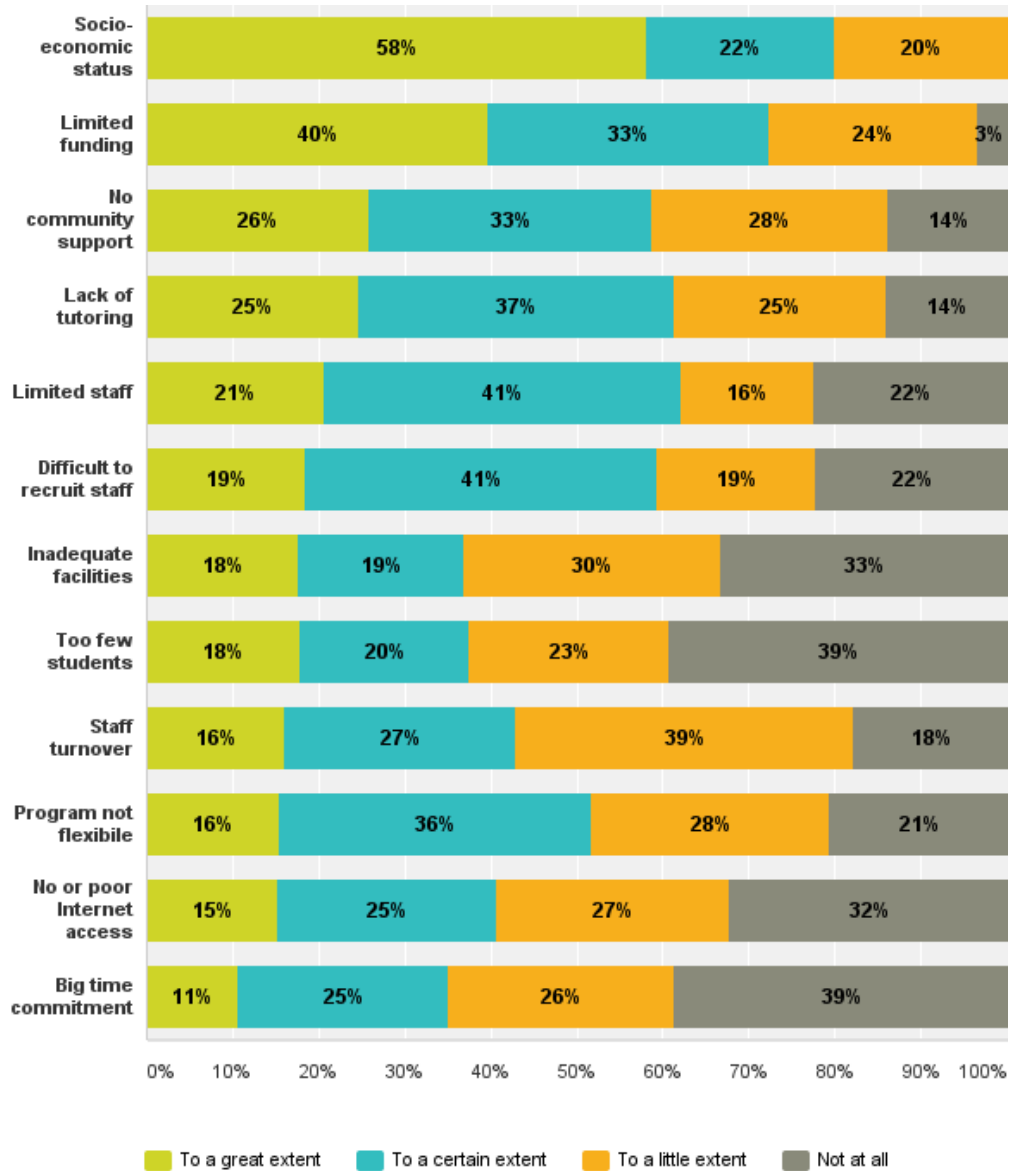


#### 5.3.3.4 Challenges to Participating in Training/Education

Among current students/trainees, the majority reported having no difficulty participating in their program or course (55%). Among those who did report experiencing some difficulty, the most commonly reported reasons were family responsibilities (21%), challenging course material (17%), and “Other” (17%). Listed within “Other”, the majority respondents cited the financial burden, whether through a reduction in income, inadequate funding, or difficulty obtaining funding. Health and mental health problems were also noted.

Educators and trainers felt that the socio-economic realities of adult learners are the biggest impediments to their training/education, with 58% indicating that these realities had impacted learning to a great extent, and 22% to a certain extent (Figure 4). The next challenges identified as having the greatest impact include limited program funding, lack of community support, and a lack of tutoring support for students/trainees who required extra assistance.

Figure 7: Educator/trainer views on challenges that impact training



### 5.3.4 Recruitment and Retention

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#### 5.3.4.1 Jobs in the NWT

Most students/trainees felt that their training/education would lead them to finding jobs within their community or the NWT more broadly, with more people feeling confident about NWT as a whole (73%) than their home community (67%). Perhaps not surprisingly, job seekers and those who were currently unemployed were less optimistic. Only 13% felt confident about job prospects in either their home community or the NWT as a whole.

Over three-quarters of current students/trainees are hoping to stay in the NWT after completion of their programs (76%). Of those, 67% would like to remain in their home community, while 29% are open to working anywhere in the NWT. Among those students who plan to leave the NWT after completion of their programs, the most common response was seeking educational or employment opportunities that are not available either in the NWT or in their home community. Beyond that, some simply desired to experience living somewhere new, and others noted the lack of housing and high cost of living. When asked what might keep them in the NWT, the most common response was a guaranteed job in their field.

#### 5.3.4.2 Recruitment

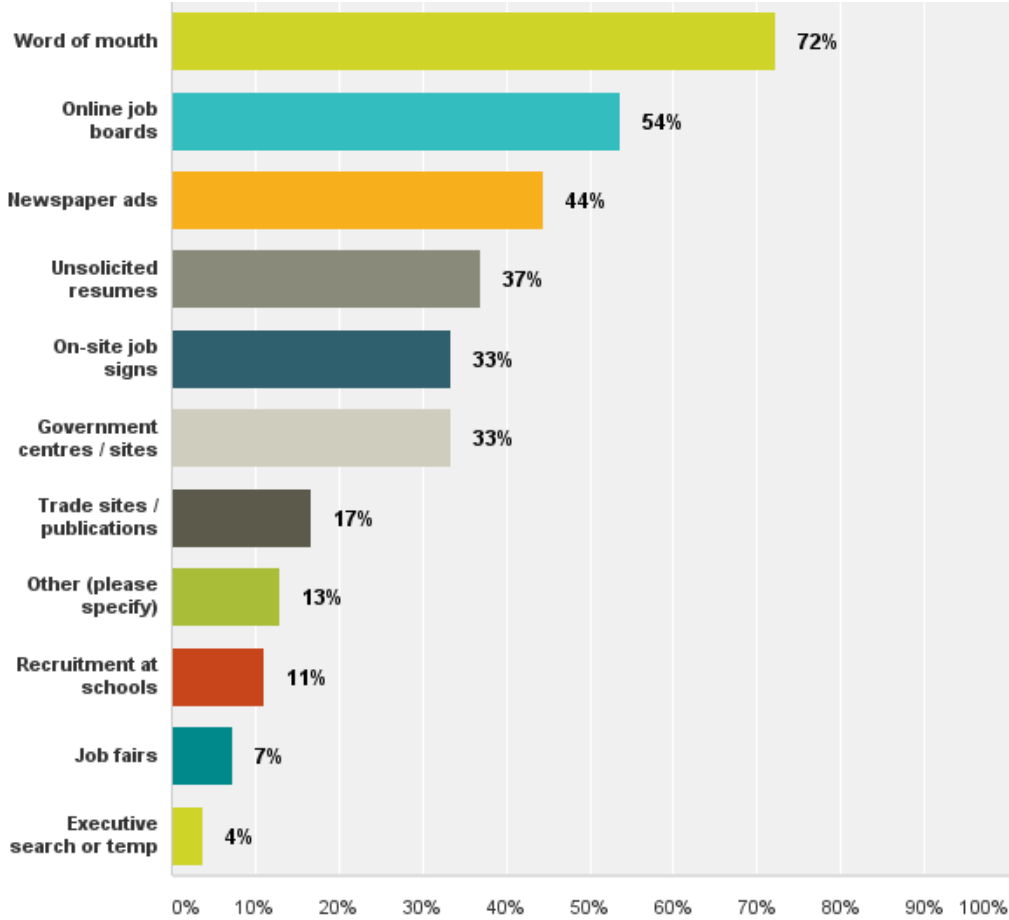
Among those who are currently employed, 36% found their current job through an online job site, 24% through their peer network, and 26% identified an unlisted option (“Other”). Among the “Other” responses, most indicated finding the job through a personal or professional relationship, such as being told about the job by a friend or former employer, or were contacted by a recruiter.

Among job seekers, an online job search tool was by far the most common means of finding information on employment opportunities (86%), followed by word of mouth (57%), a community newsletter or bulletin (50%), and a list serve or social media (43%).

Employers’ most frequent means of recruiting new employees included “Word of mouth/ personal contacts/ referrals/ informal networks” (72%), online job boards/postings (54%), newspaper ads (44%), and government employment centres or websites (33%) (Figure 8).



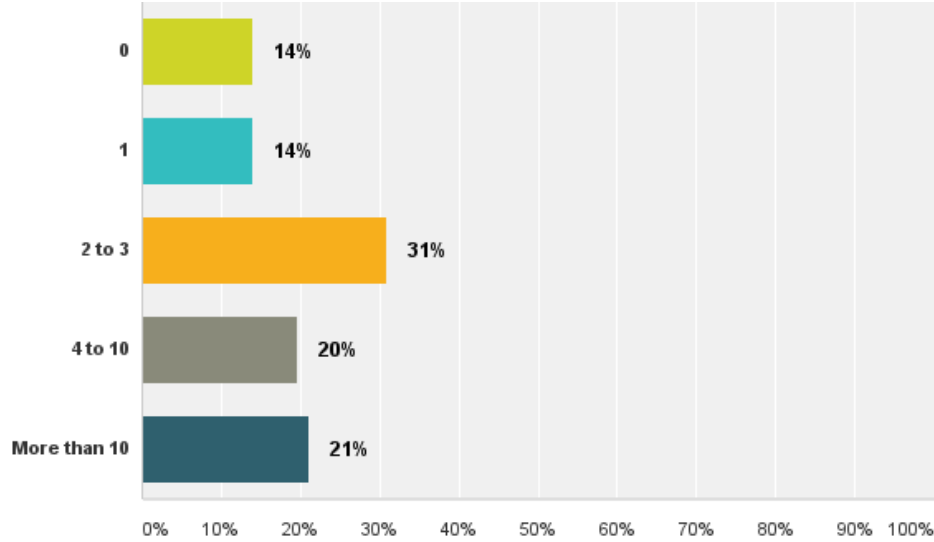
Figure 8: Employer recruitment methods



These numbers corresponded to what employers viewed as being the **most** effective means of recruiting new employees, with “Word of mouth/ personal contacts/ referrals/ informal networks” being the clear winner, with 40% of respondents indicating that this method was most effective. Online job boards/postings (19%), government employment centres or websites (11%), and newspaper ads (9%) round out the top four most effective recruitment methods.

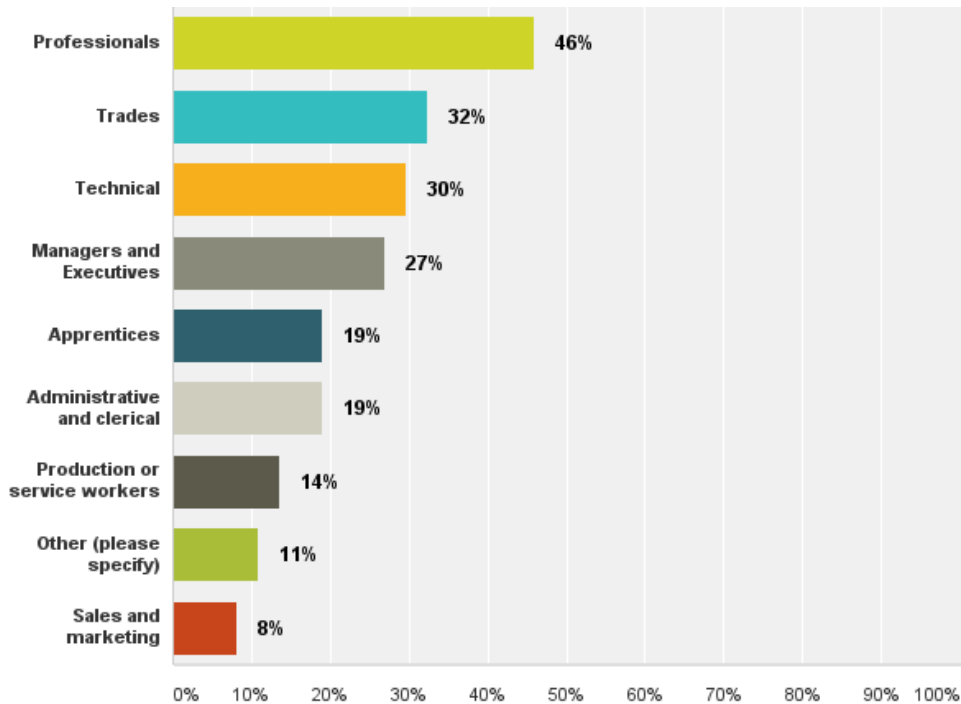
Recruitment methods appear to have been at least somewhat successful, as a sizable proportion of employers hired over ten employees in the previous year (21%) (Figure 9). The most popular response was 2 to 3 employees (31%).

Figure 9: Employer new hires in the previous year



Nearly two-thirds of employers did, however, have positions that they found “hard to fill”, where the search for a suitable worker takes longer than usual or lasts longer than originally planned. The most common reasons for a position being “hard to fill” included “Applicants did not have required qualifications (education level/credentials)” (62%), “Applicants did not have required skills” (54%), and “Applicants did not have required work experience” (51%). Other common responses included “Applicants did not have required motivation, attitude, or interpersonal abilities” (32%) and “Could not compete with other employers pay and benefits” (32%). Over a quarter of employers indicated that for some positions there were simply no applicants (27%). The types of positions employers found most hard to fill included professionals (46%), trades (32%), technical (30%), and managers and executives (27%) (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Types of “hard-to-fill” positions

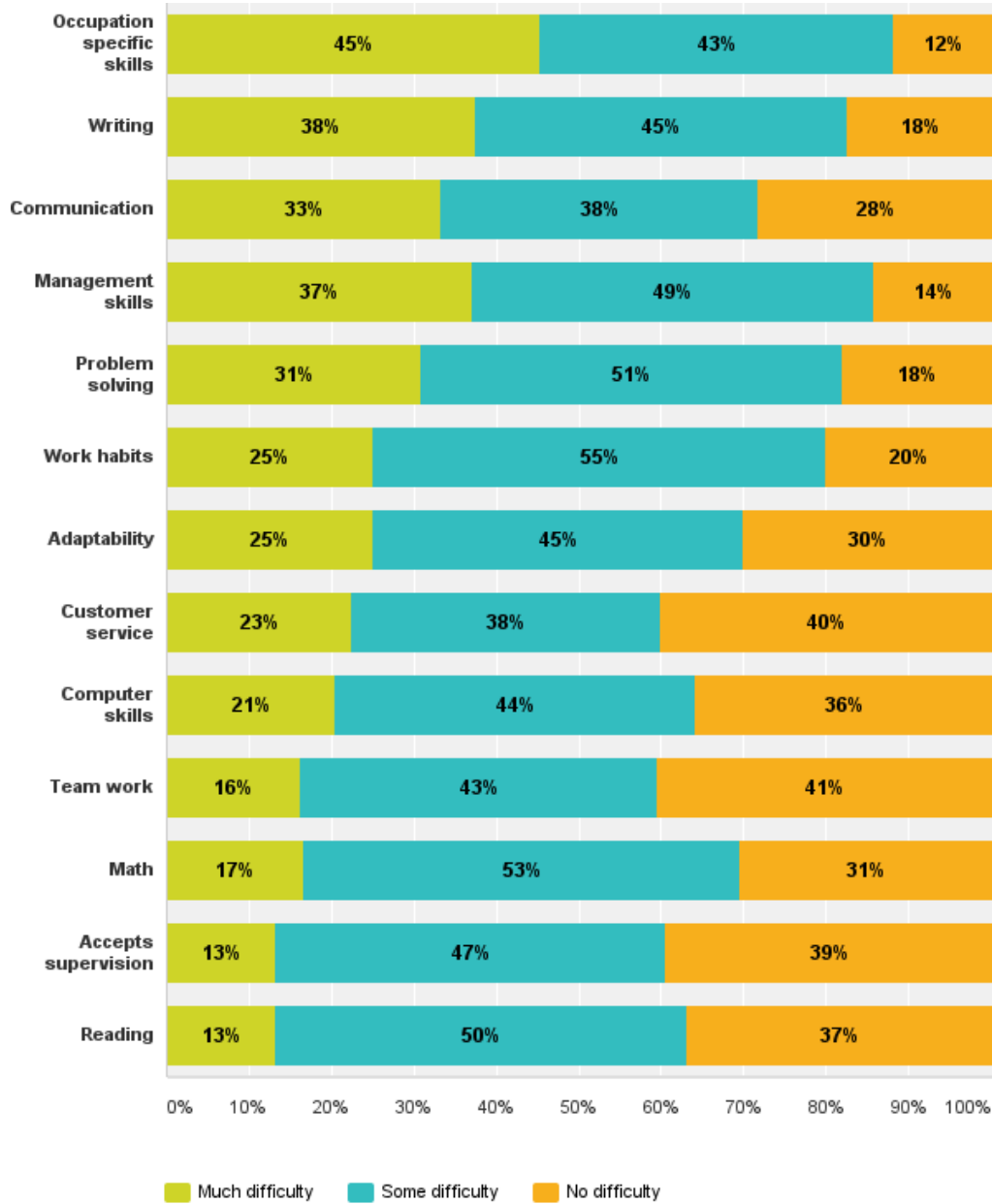


When asked what the impact of these hard to fill positions was, by far the most common response was an increased workload for other staff (86%). This was followed by difficulties meeting quality standards (46%), decreased productivity (35%), and difficulties introducing new work practices (27%).

Additionally, employers were asked to rate how difficult it was to find candidates with specific types of skills. The most difficult skills to find include occupation specific skills (45%), writing skills (38%), communication skills (33%), and management skills (37%) (Figure 11).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Percentages indicate the proportion of respondents who reported having “much difficulty” finding employees with the particular skill.

Figure 11: Difficult to find employee skills

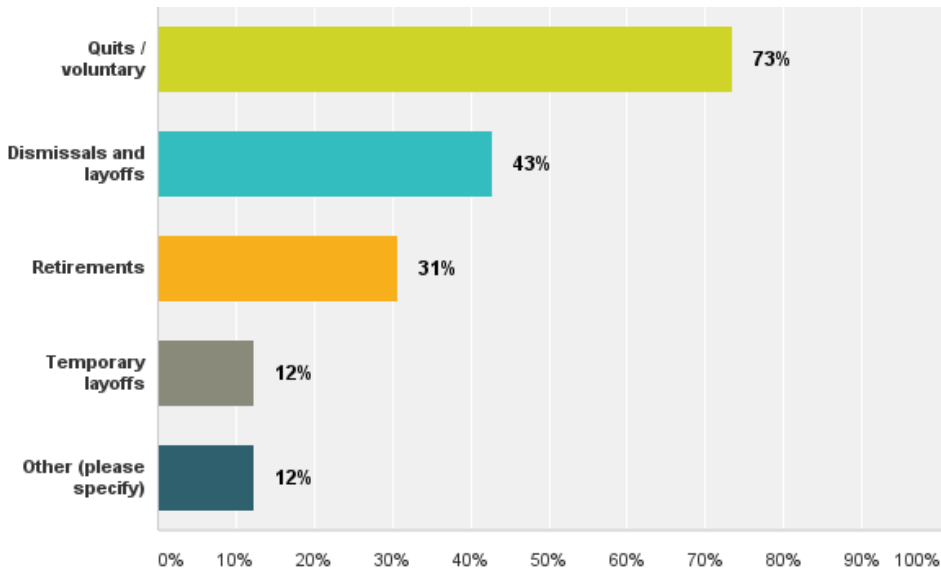


### 5.3.4.3 Retention

Most employers lost at least some employees during the past year, with 21% losing more than 10, 20% losing 4 to 10, 21% losing 2 to 3, and 16% losing one. Only 21% of employers did not have any employees leave within the past year.

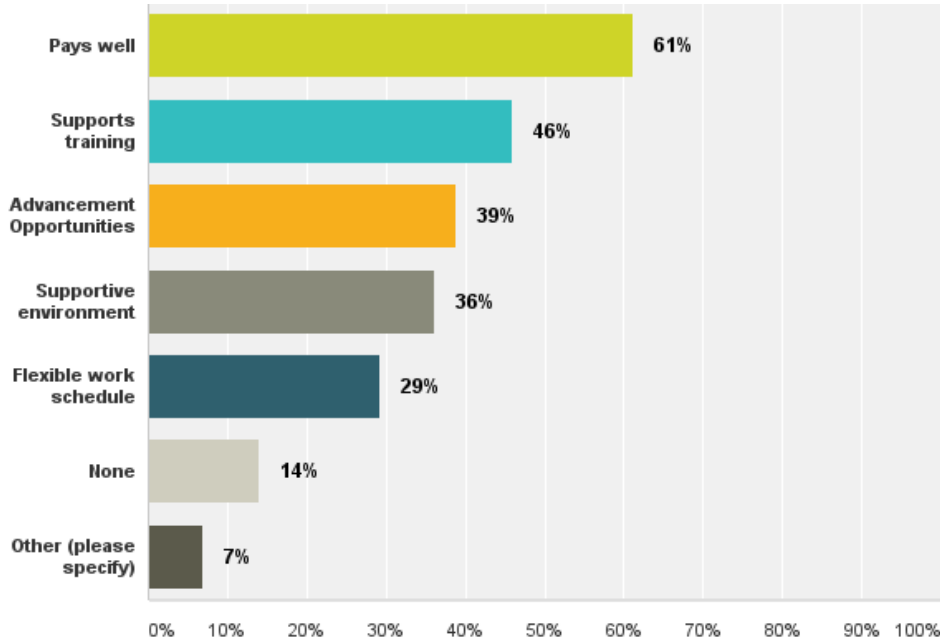
The reasons for employees' departure varied, with "Quits / voluntary separations" being by far the most common reason (73) (Figure 12). This was followed by dismissals and permanent layoffs (43%), and retirements (31%). Interestingly, among the "Other" responses, several noted that their employees were moving away from the NWT.

Figure 12: Reasons for employee departures



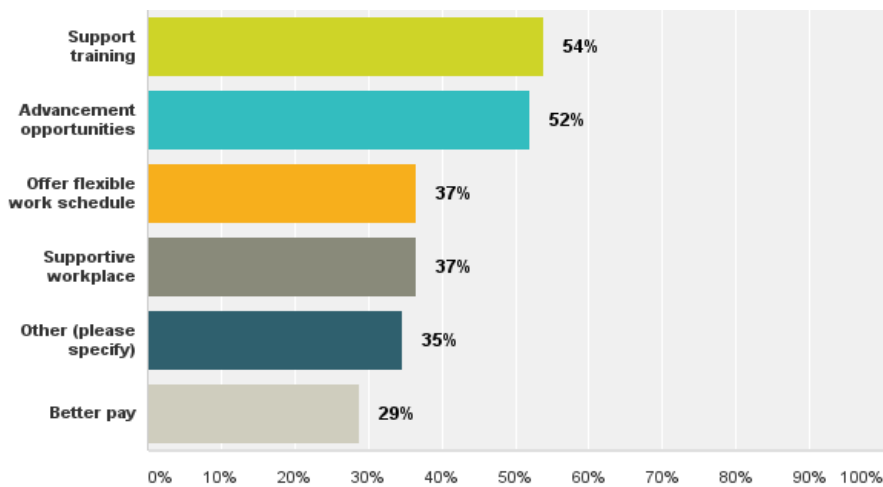
Those who are currently employed were asked what efforts their employers made to retain them. The most common responses were paying employees well (61%), supporting education and skills training opportunities (46%), providing career advancement opportunities (38%), and fostering a supportive work environment (36%) (Figure 13).

Figure 13: Employee reported retention strategies utilized by their employers



When further asked what supports their employers could offer to make them more likely to stay in their current positions, better pay was surprisingly the least popular response (29%) (Figure 14). Survey respondents were most interested in additional education and skills training opportunities (54%) and career advancement opportunities (52%). Wanting their employers to offer a flexible work schedule (37%) and foster a supportive work environment (37%) were also popular. There were also a large number of “Other” responses (35%). Employees offered a wide range of suggestions including providing individuals more autonomy at work, job security, payment for overtime, better benefits and pension plans, and filling open positions / staffing in sufficient numbers.

Figure 14: Retention strategies desired by employees



Employers were also asked about their retention strategies in open ended questions. Most responses were in line with what was reported by employees, particularly better wages and training opportunities. Additionally, employers mentioned hiring locally, being family friendly, providing a positive work environment and treating employees with respect.

Further, students, job seekers, and those who are currently employed were all asked what they thought could get more students and professionals to remain in the NWT to help build a highly educated and skilled workforce. Across all stakeholder groups, many cited the importance of the availability of jobs. Further, it was noted that jobs need to be well paying given the high cost of living. Availability of housing was also noted. Providing opportunities for young professionals was a key theme, and some suggested that the GNWT itself should provide more entry level positions to those looking to begin their career in the NWT. Other suggestions included providing more educational options to discourage students from going South to study, as well as ensuring recreational opportunities and facilities to entice people to stay in the North.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The Skills 4 Success Engagement Report shares back what we heard from residents across the NWT. It communicates ideas, insights and guidance on how to build skills, knowledge and attitudes for employment success. Fostering a vibrant economy and healthy thriving communities is a shared effort and responsibility. Our commitment to seek input and listen reflects a belief that as residents and committed citizens we have the knowledge, contextual understanding, and insights regarding the type of future we want and what change is needed to get there.

The information collected throughout the engagement process and reported in this document will be used to inform the development of a 10-year strategic framework that will set out new direction for adult and postsecondary education and skills training in the NWT. Additionally, it will provide key information to drive the subsequent action plan to implement the strategy framework. The report will be shared widely. We encourage other government departments, federal agencies, community governments, NGOs, the business community and engaged citizens to use findings in this report to support their own efforts and projects. Our end goal is the same, building healthy vibrant communities where all individuals have an opportunity to flourish. While this report formally captures the feedback collected through the facilitated regional focus groups, NWT Skills 4 Success Symposium, and the online survey, we have not shut the door to listening. You can continue to provide input over the course of the project through our website [www.skills4success.ca](http://www.skills4success.ca). You will also find project updates and key documents and reports on this site.

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