

**EMPLOYMENT
ONTARIO**

Women and Youth in the Trades

**LOCAL STRATEGY TO FILLING THE GAP
2015 REPORT**



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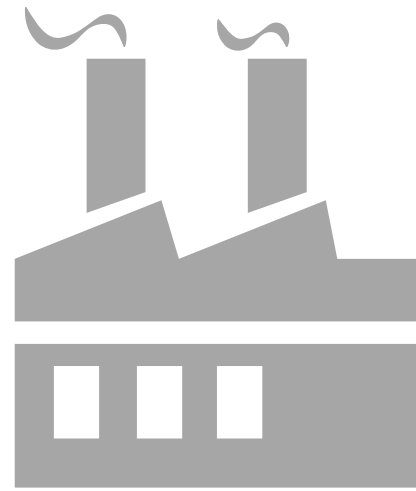
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Executive Summary

The Windsor-Essex region is facing dramatic skills shortages in the manufacturing, transportation, and construction sectors. At the same time, the region is experiencing an unemployment rate of 10.9%, which is well above the national average of 6.8%. Despite the high unemployment rate, employers in these sectors report challenges with finding qualified individuals. Additionally, women, who represent 47.9% of the workforce in Windsor-Essex County (Statistics Canada, 2011), are not seeking opportunities in these growing sectors.

In 2013, Women's Enterprise Skills Training of Windsor Inc. (WEST) conducted a community needs assessment in Windsor-Essex to examine issues regarding women and young women pursuing training and employment in the skilled trades. Our findings from the needs assessment indicated that 42% of female respondents were aware of the skilled trades; however, 66% of these women indicated they would not consider a career in the skilled trades. Moreover, 45% of female respondents stated that if provided with the information, training and opportunity, they would consider a job in the skilled trades (WE Succeed, Needs Assessment Report, 2013).

Following this research, in 2014, WEST received funding through the Ontario Labour Market Partnership, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) to conduct this local community-based labour market research in sectors with high underrepresentation of women to identify the challenges and barriers faced by employers in these fields. The objective was to gain an understanding of employer challenges relating to recruiting, hiring, and retaining women in their respective companies. The findings were incorporated into a resource kit for employers, *Women and Youth in the Trades: Employer Human Resources Toolkit for Windsor-Essex*, to increase employment of women in under-represented industries in our community.



THE CHALLENGE

This project sought to determine the causes of the skills shortage and what challenges and barriers are preventing more women from entering the skilled trades. The shortage is anticipated to worsen and some labour market analysts forecast the shortage to be at 2.7 million workers in Canada by 2031 (Miner, 2014). This will have a significant effect on our local economic development. A regionalized approach to increasing the workforce in these sectors will help alleviate this shortage and lead to enhanced economic competitiveness for the region.

FINDINGS

Research was carried out through a series of focus groups, interviews with tradeswomen, and roundtable discussions with employers and community stakeholders. Based on discussions with local employers, several factors have been identified as contributing to the local skills shortages:

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations brought forward by employers through the focus groups, interviews, and roundtable discussions were to:

- Foster stronger connections between industry and education
- Build partnerships between community organizations and industry
- Market the skilled trades as primary career paths for women and youth
- Raise the profile/status of the skilled trades in Windsor-Essex
- Provide support for employers to bring more women into the trades

This report presents the findings of this research project and gives a strategic overview of the future of women in the skilled trades in Windsor-Essex.

- 1 The Great Recession
- 2 Regional competition and worker migration
- 3 Employer competition
- 4 Growth of non-technical postsecondary education
- 5 Lack of interest among youth combined with an aging workforce

Interviews with tradeswomen and discussions with employers revealed that there are many barriers and challenges to attracting and retaining women in the skilled trades:

- **Employer's perceptions of women**
- **Women's lack of social network in these sectors**
- **Structural barriers (washrooms, transportation, etc)**



THE CHALLENGE

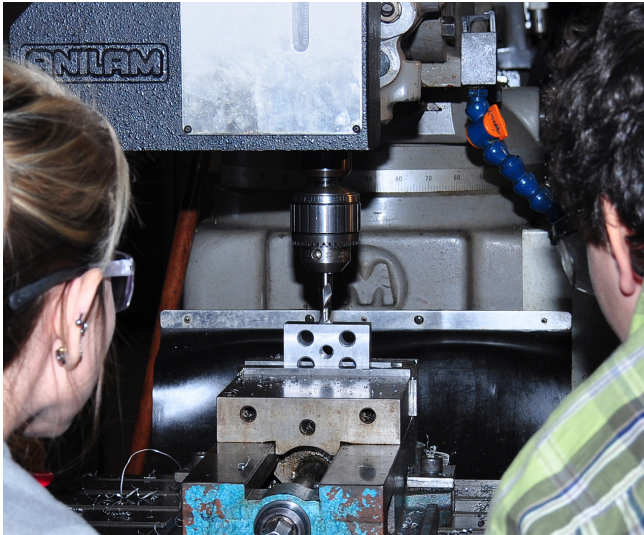
The Great Recession significantly weakened the economy in Windsor-Essex; however, the recent revitalization of the manufacturing sector has spurred major economic development in the region. Local companies have started to grow and expand their operations locally, nationally and internationally. The largest obstacle to this growth is not the employers' ability to find work, but rather their ability to access skilled workers. The Windsor-Essex region is facing a dramatic skills shortage in the manufacturing, transportation and construction sectors. The demand for skilled tradespeople is greatly exceeding the supply. This shortage of skilled workers has the potential to stunt the growth of our local economy and have dire consequences on the region.

Currently, 79% of the workforce in manufacturing, transportation, and construction are males (Statistics Canada, 2014); however, there is another reservoir of labour ready to be integrated: women. Women and youth continue to be untapped talent pools that have the potential to eliminate this labour market issue. The 2011 National Household Survey indicated that women in Windsor-Essex only represented 25% of the manufacturing sector, although the manufacturing sector in Windsor-Essex employs approximately 26% of the Windsor-Essex workforce. Furthermore, women only represent 10% of the construction sector and 30% of the transportation and warehousing sector in our region (Statistics Canada, Labour Force Survey, 2006). Only 3% of registered apprentices in Ontario are female and the current youth unemployment rate in Windsor-Essex is 16.5% (Statistics Canada, 2014).

People in these talent pools have not been motivated to actively pursue careers in these fields. A skills mismatch has been created because workforce education and training has become misaligned with the needs of the labour market. A regionalized approach to addressing this skills mismatch will improve the workforce in these sectors, alleviate the labour shortage, and lead to the enhanced economic competitiveness of Windsor-Essex.



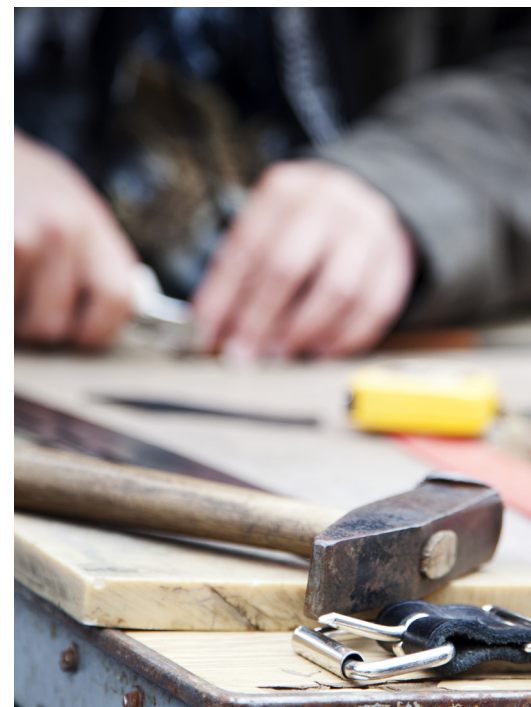
INTRODUCTION TO HR STRATEGY



3 FEATURES OF THIS PROBLEM

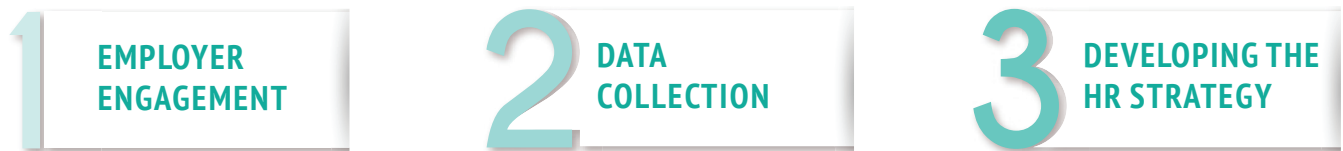
- 1 A shortage of skilled tradespeople that is stagnating economic development.
- 2 The lack of representation of women and youth in the manufacturing, construction and transportation sectors.
- 3 High unemployment rate in a region with high job vacancy rate in certain sectors.

Women's Enterprise Skills Training of Windsor Inc. (WEST) received funding from the Ontario Labour Market Partnership, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities to conduct local community-based labour market research in sectors with high underrepresentation of women to identify the challenges and barriers faced by employers in manufacturing, construction, and transportation. The objective was to gain an understanding of employer barriers relating to recruiting, hiring and retaining women in their respective companies. However, while conducting the research with local employers it was found that women and youth needed to be incorporated into a unified Human Resources Strategy in order to eliminate the skills mismatch and ensure that the right people, with the right skills, are doing the right jobs. *The Women and Youth in the Trades: Employer Human Resources Toolkit for Windsor-Essex* incorporates these research findings as a resource for employers to increase the employment of women and youth in under-represented industries in our community.



METHODOLOGY

The development of the human resources strategy was divided into three phases:



PHASE 1: EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

WEST created an Industry Council to assist with guiding the organization’s work to support women in the skilled trades. The development of this research is based on discussions with members of the Industry Council. To ensure that the scope of the project met the needs of industry, the Council worked with WEST in guiding the proposed research and outreaching to employers.

PHASE 2: DATA COLLECTION

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Vital to the research was collecting and analyzing literature on the challenges and barriers facing women in the skilled trades. This provided best practices from regional, national, and international literature that examined the transition of women into the skilled trades.

FOCUS GROUPS WITH EMPLOYERS IN THE TRADES:

The project hosted a series of focus groups with industry representatives from manufacturing, construction, and transportation who experienced challenges relating to recruiting, hiring and retention of women in their respective companies. There were five focus groups held with 41 employers, HR representatives, educators and staffing agencies.

INTERVIEWS WITH WOMEN IN THE SKILLED TRADES:

Data collected from the focus groups were used to develop interview questions for women in the trades. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 tradeswomen on how effective they felt their employers’ were in attracting, recruiting, hiring and retaining women; how welcoming the workplace environment was towards them; how existing policies and procedures promoted or limited the representation of women in these fields; and recommendations on improving the experience of women in under-represented occupations.

Focus Group Attendee Breakdown by Organizational Function



Focus Group Gender Breakdown



PHASE 3: DEVELOPING THE HR STRATEGY

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS WITH EMPLOYERS IN TRADES:

The project hosted roundtable discussions with industry representatives to share the research findings and to identify solutions and recommendations to break down existing barriers to increasing the representation of women in the skilled trades. The participants (employers, educators and recruiters) identified strategies and tools to be implemented to increase the representation of women in the skilled trades.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT:

The research findings are incorporated in *Women and Youth in the Trades: Employer Human Resources Toolkit for Windsor-Essex* to be used by employers to increase the employment of women in under-represented industries in our community. This online and print-based resource guide was developed to aid employers in creating a positive work culture for women in the trades. The toolkit will be disseminated through various networks.



MANUFACTURING
33%



STAFFING
21%



EDUCATION
14%



COMMUNITY/OTHER
14%



TRANSPORTATION
10%



CONSTRUCTION
8%

FINDINGS

4.1 Perceived Causes of the Skilled Trades Shortage

30% employer competition

25% university/
no interest

22% regional comp
/migration

16% recession/
cyclical

7% retirement



4.1.1 FACTORS THAT HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE LOCAL SKILLED TRADES SHORTAGE:

Discussions with employers have identified six key factors that have contributed to the skilled trades shortage in Windsor-Essex.

The Great Recession created a poor economic climate that forced employers to reduce investment in training, which meant layoffs for several of their newly recruited apprentices. These apprentices had to seek employment in other sectors and although the economy recovered, they elected to remain in other sectors that were perceived to have more job security.

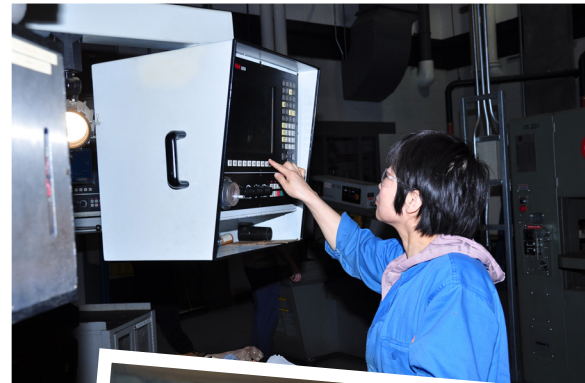
Cyclical nature of the trades or in some cases seasonal nature of the work in the skilled trades causes many people to be hesitant about committing to a career in the trades.

Regional competition and worker migration: The Canadian economy is exceptionally regionalized. The downturn in the automotive manufacturing industry caused many people from Windsor-Essex to migrate to prosperous regions, such as Alberta or other regions in Ontario.

Employer competition: Employers within the region had to become increasingly competitive with each other when trying to attract and retain skilled workers in the trades. This led to increased turnover, talent poaching, and impacted small businesses' ability to hire people with the skills that they needed. The increased turnover rate has made employers leery to invest money into training.

Growth of non-technical postsecondary education: During the great recession, many people chose to pursue post-secondary education instead of trying to secure employment in the bleak economy. As enrolments in colleges and universities swelled, the number of people choosing careers in manufacturing, construction, and transportation declined.

Uninterested youth and aging workforce: Many employers mentioned that the local youth show little or no interest in careers in the skilled trades. When employers are able to recruit youth for careers in the trades, they have a difficult time retaining them. This is a troubling trend as the baby-boomer generation continues to transition into retirement. It is essential to have young workers entering the trades to learn from experienced workers before they retire and take their knowledge and expertise with them.



4.1.2 WOMEN IN THE TRADES

One of the primary reasons that employers in the skilled trades have such a difficult time finding the best and brightest employees is because they only recruit from 50% of the population. The skilled trades are male dominated fields despite several efforts by educators, employers, and the government to encourage more women to enter the trades. Historically, initiatives to encourage more women to join the trades have been largely ad hoc and short term in nature. As a result, there have been brief moments in time when women entered the skilled trades but this momentum is lost when funding and support is withdrawn. Despite being in the minority, our research has revealed that skilled tradeswomen continue to thrive in Windsor-Essex.

4.1.3 POPULATION DISCONNECTED FROM THE WORKFORCE

Windsor-Essex has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada. It was 11.9% as of May of 2015 (Statistics Canada, 2015); approximately 6 percentage points higher than the national average. Unemployment is a highly complex phenomenon and many factors influence a person's ability to seek and find employment, such as social capital, lack of education, or lack of experience. However, certain segments of the population face additional challenges and barriers when trying to enter the workforce in Ontario. For instance, in 2011, Aboriginal people (13%), lone parents (8.1%), and newcomers (13.9%) experienced higher than average unemployment rates (Statistics Canada, 2011). Eliminating barriers to employment for at risk groups will make labour market entry less challenging, increase labour supply, and greatly reduce the local unemployment rate.



4.2 Barriers to women finding employment in the trades

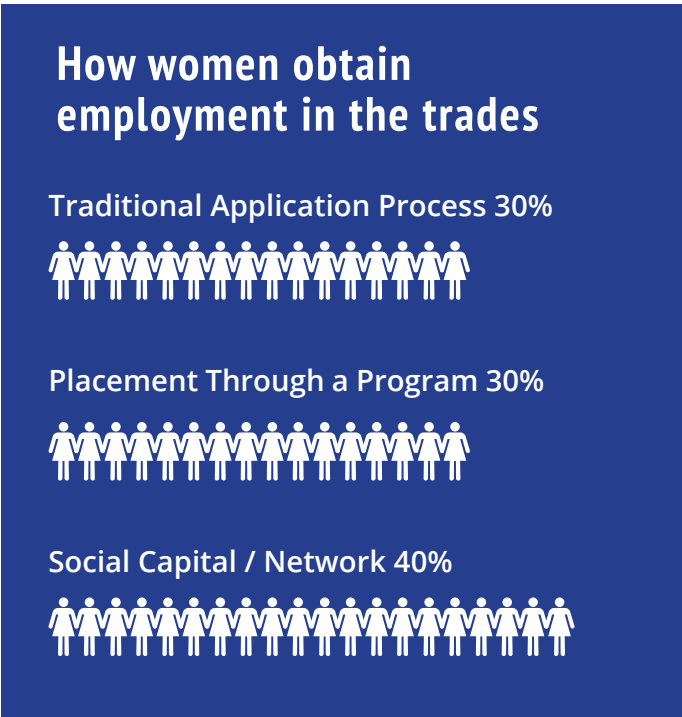
4.2.1 PERCEPTION THAT TRADES ARE NOT FOR WOMEN

Two common themes relating to the perception of women in the trades emerged from discussions with employers and tradeswomen. First, employers did not see women as having the physical capacity to work in the trades. During focus groups, employers expressed concern about women’s ability to meet the physical requirements of working in the skilled trades. However, some employers felt that the sentiment was too generalized as some male counterparts may lack the physical strength. The women interviewed confirmed that employers had unfounded concerns about their ability to handle the physical nature of the work.

The second theme was that societal norms did not encourage women to consider the skilled trades as an option for employment. 60% of the skilled tradeswomen interviewed reported that they pursued careers in their field because they had the aptitude and interest from a young age. Parents and educators should fuel this passion and that has not been the case historically. However, this is changing as many local initiatives have been implemented to increase the number of young women pursuing careers in the skilled trades. Programs such as Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) have been successfully recruiting more young women into skilled trade’s education, but they are facing challenges with placing young women in the workplace.

4.2.2 LACK OF NETWORK OR SOCIAL CAPITAL

Many employers find new employees through their social network. This technique, while not intentionally exclusionary, does limit access to jobs in the trades for those groups that are not part of the network, especially women. Generally, male employees do not think to reach out to women; as a result, women are not aware of job openings in the trades nor see such jobs as being potential opportunities for them. Of the women interviewed, 40% obtained employment through their network, but the majority struggled to find employment or did not have access to a network that would facilitate labour market entry.



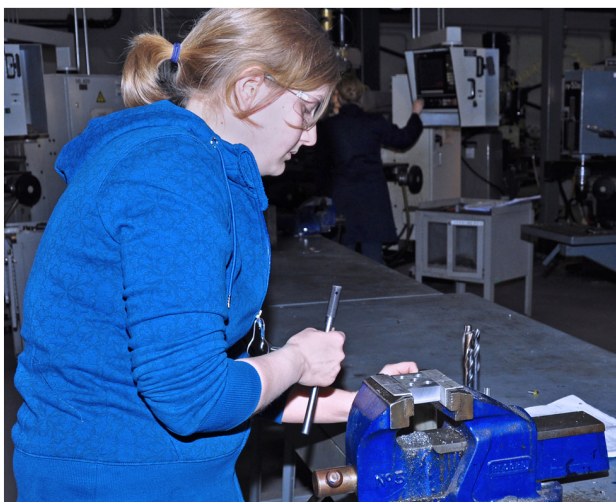
4.3 Challenges to Employing Women in the Trades

4.3.1 STRUCTURAL ISSUES

The majority of employers (57%) indicated that structural issues are hindering available talent from seeking employment, such as limited transportation and flexible childcare during nonstandard hours. Additionally, many companies reported not having the facilities to accommodate hiring women. The most common issue was washroom facilities and change rooms for women. Small companies especially struggled with this because they did not have the financial resources for renovations. However, many employers from small companies expressed that they would be willing to construct facilities if there were interested qualified women. During the interviews, several women indicated that they have experienced issues with washroom and changing facilities. These issues included being expected to change with the men and being given facilities in less than desirable locations.

4.3.2 HARASSMENT

Employers also communicated concern about legal issues that may result from hiring women. Specifically, fear of harassment in the workplace and accusations of discrimination as a result of firing or laying-off a female tradesperson. Employers are concerned that hiring women will expose them to greater risk of lawsuits because of insufficient human resources practices and company policies. The employers did not feel equipped to deal with these potential legal issues. This fear of workplace harassment has resulted in many employers hesitating to hire women. These employers stated a need for harassment training in the workplace. Many felt that the organizational cultural change that is needed to accept women would be more difficult to achieve than the structural changes. However, during the interviews with skilled tradeswomen, the overwhelming majority had not experienced harassment from their male co-workers. Instead, they felt that their male co-workers were very accepting and supportive. Of the interviewees, only 10% indicated experiencing harassment in the workplace.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE REGION

During the roundtable discussions, 56% of stakeholders in the skilled trades thought that the most important facet of the HR Strategy was collaboration between the entire Windsor-Essex Community so that decisions could be made proactively instead of reactively.

5.1 Stronger connection between education and industry

Forging a stronger connection between education (secondary and post-secondary) and industry will give students a better understanding of available career choices in the skilled trades. More importantly, educators need to acknowledge the viability of the skilled trades as a career path and communicate this to students and parents. Industry needs to invest time and money into establishing relationships with educators in order to promote the skilled trades as a viable career choice. For example, industry could create scholarships for students who choose a career in the skilled trades.

Industry can also contribute guest speakers, industry tours, and other events that will promote careers in the skilled trades to students. The school boards should compile and share a database of employers who are willing to offer industry tours or give a career presentation providing an easy access to the resources needed to educate students about the opportunities in the skilled trades. The school boards need to continue to develop innovative implementation of experiential learning, such as the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program, co-op placements, and internships.

5.2 Raise the profile of the skilled trades

Enhancing the public perception of the skilled trades can help encourage more people to choose a career as a journeyman. The public still perceives the trades as being dirty, dangerous, and low skilled; this perception is completely misaligned with the reality of working as a modern tradesperson. Holding events to educate the public about what the modern construction, manufacturing, and transportation sectors look like is a great way to change these perceptions. Successful events can include plant tours, open houses, community events, job fairs, and educational fairs. Guests should include students, parents, educators, media, and community leaders. The event can have a much larger impact if multiple companies work together. An example of this would be celebrating Manufacturing Day by hosting simultaneous events across the city and the county. The public could visit each location and learn about the unique and diverse opportunities that exist in manufacturing, construction and transportation.

- 1 Construction, manufacturing and transportation are the largest contributors to the local economy and success in these sectors translates into success for the region.
- 2 Plastic auto parts created by our mold industry will improve the efficiency of cars and minimize their environmental impact.
- 3 Modern construction techniques greatly increase the efficiency of homes. This saves families money and reduces environmental harm.

These sectors make our way of life possible and it is important to educate the public about their broader social significance.



5.3 Stronger connection between industry and community organizations

An employer's most valuable asset is a highly skilled workforce and many community organizations have the capacity to help employers build this asset. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) funds the Employment Ontario (EO) network to connect Ontarians and employers. One of the mandates of the EO network is to help employers fulfill their workforce needs. A strong relationship between employers and the EO network will greatly improve our regional workforce.

Windsor-Essex needs local labour market data to guide the development of our local workforce. Industry can work with local community organizations to gather and analyze this data. More collaboration during the collection will

improve the overall quality of the data that can ultimately guide regional decision-making and improve projections and responsiveness to labour market trends.

Many community organizations have the capacity to prepare people for the workforce. These organizations can respond swiftly to labour market needs and develop customized training to meet the demands of local industry. There has to be strong collaboration between industry, education, and the community for these community based training programs to succeed. These programs are not designed to compete with traditional training methods, but rather supplement them.

5.4 Eliminate Barriers

5.4.1 LACK OF PUBLIC TRANSIT IN INDUSTRIAL AREAS

One of the largest barriers to employment for many residents of Windsor-Essex is the lack of transportation to where the jobs are. Many workers rely on public transit; and, the gaps in this service prevent many people from working in the trades. Public transit does not service many industrial areas in the city or the transit schedule does not align with the needs of workers and employers in those areas. It is recommended that employers in these remote industrial areas rally together, working with community organizations and the city to create innovative solutions to the transportation barriers that will allow for the ebb and flow of labour into those regions.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL COMPANIES

6.1 TALENT SOURCES

Employers should expand where they are looking for employees and begin to consider untapped or underused talent pipelines including women, youth, newcomers, and people with disabilities. This will provide employers with access to a larger talent pool, which will allow for an increase in the diversity and talent within their company. Diverse workplaces experience lower turnover rates, which reduces time and cost needed for recruiting, hiring, and training new employees. Research has shown that women are resourceful and have been known to find safer and more efficient methods to complete work than using brute strength. Several employers (41%) agreed that there were financial and social benefits to changing their workplace culture to be more accepting and attractive to potential talent.

6.2 PEOPLE PRACTICES

There are many methods employers can implement to support and enhance their current staff. A diverse workforce can better understand the diverse needs of a company's customers. This can lead to improved customer service. Companies that have increased the number of women in their workplace have reported increased teamwork and problem solving, and improved conflict resolution around employees. Implementing inclusive and equitable management practices can lead to improved job satisfaction among employees, which can lead to lower turnover and higher job performance.





6.3 WORK MODELS

Altering traditional work models to offer flexible work arrangements can help employers retain top talent and better convert employees' time into profit. These models benefit employers for several reasons; first, employees will experience increased job satisfaction. Additionally, employees would experience less fatigue and take fewer sick days, which is more cost effective for the employer. Finally, these models are more inclusive to women and youth, as they may be more attracted to the trades if the opportunity to work under a modified work arrangement was available. Of the surveyed stakeholders from the skilled trades, 42% supported the implementation of alternative work models. Some employers explained that they had already employed alternative work models in their workplaces and experienced positive results.

6.4 HR TOOLKIT

Women's Enterprise Skills Training of Windsor Inc. has created a comprehensive toolkit, *Women and Youth in the Trades: Employer Human Resources Toolkit for Windsor-Essex*, which guides employers through the process of improving their human resources practices. This toolkit provides implementable strategies to achieve the discussed benefits of seeking new talent sources, improving people practices, and integrating new work models. Using this toolkit is a great way for employers to start the process of solving their talent shortage.





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