

A Women in Trades Program Matrix for British Columbia: Priorities and Implementation Options

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1. Introduction

Shortage of skilled labour has become a pressing challenge in most skilled trades industries across Canada, and British Columbia (BC) is among the jurisdictions most affected. In many sectors, the increasing participation of women in the labour force would tend to help mitigate these shortages. However, this is not the case for the trades. While many initiatives have been launched in various jurisdictions across Canada to encourage women to consider the trades as a viable career option, relatively few investments have been made to retain women already working in the trades.

Enhancing the Retention and Advancement of Women in Trades in British Columbia is a study conducted to provide an enriched understanding of the systemic and structural factors that present barriers to women's participation in the trades, as well as the types of supports and services that would enhance entry and retention rates. Positioning its recommendations in the provincial context, the study provides the basis for a Women in Trades (WIT) program matrix that aligns with the unique needs of tradeswomen in British Columbia.

While the focus of the study is on women *currently* working in the trades, the full spectrum of challenges and supports is considered. The study examines the barriers facing tradeswomen at multiple levels, including individual, interpersonal, organizational, and macro/system-wide, and how they manifest themselves at different stages of women's careers, including pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, and journey. Utilizing a holistic conceptual framework ensures that the recommended program matrix encompasses the full breadth of supports and services needed – while leveraging, not duplicating, activities and resources from other programs – in order to address system-wide challenges facing tradeswomen in BC.

To help translate research into action, a Facilitated Workshop was hosted on January 19, 2017 bringing stakeholders together to discuss the results of the research and to determine a course of action for implementing the program recommendations. Aiming to guide the development and implementation of a BC WIT program matrix, the agenda of the day included:

- **Review research findings and recommendations** of the Sector LMP report
- **Discuss relative priorities and possible sequencing** of the recommended program components
- **Identify leveraging opportunities** by discussing existing services and organizations that could contribute capacity towards a WIT program matrix
- **Suggest implementation options** to move forward

Following the facilitated session, a subcommittee was formed from stakeholders in attendance in order to lead further dialogue on implementation options and determine next steps. The first meeting of the subcommittee was held on February 8, 2017. This report provides a summary of the facilitated session and subcommittee meetings along with a consolidated set of recommendations for possible pilot projects that can form the basis of an implementation strategy for a made-in BC WIT program matrix.

The rest of this report is organized as follows. The next section presents a detailed summary of the feedback and opinions of stakeholders provided during the facilitated session with respect to the priorities of program services, the leveraging opportunities within existing programs, and implementation suggestions. The following section then provides a summary of the subcommittee meeting, with emerging suggestions for implementation options and next steps. Finally, a consolidated set of recommendations for possible pilot projects is provided to support the development of the strategy phase and next steps towards possible implementation.

2. Facilitated Session Summary

2.1 Overview

The facilitated session was divided into two main components. First, the research findings and recommendations from the WIT report were presented and discussed in a morning session. The purpose was both to receive feedback from the wider group of stakeholders and to ensure that all present would have a similar understanding of the research findings and recommended program components. Second, the afternoon session involved a facilitated discussion with the aim of gathering input from stakeholders on the priorities, existing capacities, and options for implementing the recommended program components.

The morning session began with a roundtable of introductions and a review of the project background and objectives. All participants had the opportunity to speak, with the majority expressing a desire for action and agreement on next steps. The core of this session consisted of the SRDC research team presenting the findings contained in the WIT report along with the recommendations. This was followed by a discussion, which included general impressions and feedback to the report. All key stakeholders were passionate about the issues and committed to helping translate research into actions. Others noted that this work is an important contribution to the government's commitment to provide innovative solutions that address broader workforce development issues in the province.

The main purpose of the afternoon session was to gather perspectives on the implications of the research findings, specifically with respect to implementation. The core of this session consisted of a guided group discussion of three areas directly related to the recommendations contained in the report: (1) priorities for addressing gaps including possible sequencing of services; (2) program options including a brief review of existing services in British Columbia that support the identified priorities; and (3) delivery options, including their pros and cons. The discussion of the three components was supported by a series of facilitated small group and joint activities. The session ended with wrap-up and discussion of next steps.

Below we present the main themes emerging from this facilitated session, organized into sections consistent with the agenda and key objectives.

2.2 WIT Report: Presentation and Discussion of Research Findings

The general consensus in the room following the WIT report presentation was that the research findings comprehensively and accurately captured the reality of the sector. While women in the trades were described as loving their careers, they continue to face a multitude of barriers, which challenge their retention and advancement in the trades. A number of participants commented that they appreciated the way the report organized these barriers in a multi-level framework, as it provides a useful guide for where to intervene.

The discussion then focused on select components of the report, where participants offered perspectives on the implications of the findings or made recommendations for specific sections of the report. The key themes from this discussion are highlighted below:

- **Importance of a multi-faceted approach:** Participants agreed that no single service or support can sufficiently and effectively address the barriers.
- **Employers play a key role:** Many saw building industry leadership as particularly important, reinforcing the need for organizational changes to drive positive outcomes. Key employers have the power to push for wider adoption of policies and practices, starting with those in their supply chain, thereby fostering further leadership development. It is also important that supports to facilitate the hiring and promotion of tradeswomen are employer-friendly.
- **Program areas:** Some participants suggested revising or expanding specific components of the report related to program areas, including: a) Upskilling – comprehensive training that includes technical skills as well as soft skills (e.g., professional development, leadership, small business skills; b) Ensure that interventions such as financial incentives minimize the potential negative effects on women, so that they do not make women a greater target for workplace harassment or discrimination due to perceptions of unfair advantage; and c) Help build capacity for women speakers in the trades and other champions (e.g. through financial supports to facilitate participation in conferences and networking events for women speakers in trades and other champions).
- **Roles and responsibilities:** Some participants argued there are existing organizations that have a role in addressing certain gaps identified in the report. For example, some pointed out that respectful workplaces are a legislated responsibility for employers to enforce. Others said that the unions need to enforce the culture change as well, working in concert with employers. Finally, some identified a role for WorkSafe to play in supporting harassment-free workplaces through employer incentives, including certification and discounts. A more fulsome discussion of roles related to implementation took place in the afternoon session and is described in the relevant sections.
- **Women’s versus workers’ issues:** Some participants stressed that many of the themes and barriers identified in the report are relevant not just to women, but to workers in general, saying that “the industry’s culture is tough for everyone.” The group noted a number of recommendations in the report that if implemented would benefit everyone (e.g., through anti-bullying policies or improved health and safety practices).

2.3 Discussion of Program Areas for Addressing Gaps

2.3.1 Sequencing and priorities

It is important to preface this section by stressing that all the program areas identified in the WIT report are vital to improving the retention and advancement of women working in the trades. The program areas are organized to provide a holistic suite of service components to address the barriers at all levels. Many participants in this session noted the challenge that not having the full information about potential roles and resources posed. Notwithstanding the need to take into account the availability of resources to support WIT initiatives in British Columbia as well as to engage in strategic planning to appropriately develop and implement these services, the participants were challenged to rank and sequence the relative strategic priorities from amongst the program areas identified in the report.

Each participant was asked to complete an exercise to indicate the relative priority of each of the program components, and to choose a timeframe for its implementation, from right away (year 1), near-future (years 2 and 3), and later on (years 4 and beyond). Participants then discussed their choices in small roundtables, coming to an agreement as a group and providing a rationale for their ranking. Finally, each table reported back to the wider group, with the key themes gathered and refined by the facilitators based on the overall discussion.

Table 1 summarizes the results of this discussion, with each box representing the views of each small group on the relative ranking of the different program components. The majority of stakeholders felt that WIT program components needed to be implemented as soon as possible within year 1. Some participants suggested that certain strategic components of each program area should be implemented as soon as possible by targeting resources into areas that are known to work well. However, not all components could be implemented immediately as some elements would be contingent on others being in place. Here is the breakdown of the component rankings¹ seen in Table 1:

- 58 component rankings fall within year 1
- 29 component rankings fall within year 2-3
- Only 3 component rankings fall within year 4+

Together, these rankings paint a picture of the degree of consensus in opinions about the suggested sequencing of these components. Indeed, the high degree of consensus on some of the relative priorities suggests some notion of sequencing of the component levels:

¹ Each group of participant stakeholders at the facilitated session were asked to assign each of the 13 recommended program components for a new WIT program matrix. A “component ranking” simply refers to *one* of the assigned program priorities for a given group of stakeholders.

- **Organizational** components were almost unanimously viewed as a priority for year 1 implementation.
- **Macro** and **interpersonal** components were also viewed as immediate priorities for year 1 implementation, though with a mix of the components.
- **Individual** components were generally viewed as year 2-3 implementation by the majority of stakeholders.

Table 1 Priority and sequencing of program components: Small group rankings

Level	Program Component	Right away (Year 1)	Near future (Year 2 – 3)	Later on (Year 4+)
Macro	Outreach, engagement and education	✓✓✓✓✓✓	✓	
	Advocacy and leadership development	✓✓✓✓✓	✓✓	
	Strategic engagement of target pops	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓✓
Organizational	Organizational needs analysis, business case development	✓✓✓✓✓✓✓		
	Organizational supports to employers with policies and practices	✓✓✓✓✓✓✓		
	Workplace training, other workshops	✓✓✓✓✓	✓✓	
Interpersonal	Local event management	✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓	
	Professional networking events	✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓	
	Coordinating mentorship	✓✓✓✓✓	✓	✓
Individual	Career assessment and counselling	✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓	
	Soft skills training and expectation management	✓✓✓	✓✓✓	
	Continual wrap-around supports to tradeswomen	✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓	
	Others: Upskilling	✓✓✓	✓✓✓✓	

Note: Program components listed in column 2 correspond to those recommended in the report *Enhancing the Retention and Advancement of Women in Trades in British Columbia*. The labels are listed above as presented during the session and differ only slightly from those published components for brevity and clarity.

At the same time, there is a degree of variability in the relative priorities across the four levels and in their sub-components. Tables 2 through 4 capture the priorities and sequencing of the WIT program components taking into account both the priority ranking as well as the degree of consensus among the stakeholders, captured by the intensity of the colour in the figure. Three key clusters or groupings emerge from this analysis:

Very high priority, high consensus – immediate implementation, year 1 (Table 2)

- ORGANIZATIONAL - Supports to employers with policies and practices
- ORGANIZATIONAL - Supports with needs analysis, action planning
- MACRO - Outreach, engagement, and education
- MACRO - Advocacy and leadership development
- INTERPERSONAL - Coordinating mentorship opportunities, formal & informal

Participants were in agreement that organizational analysis and action planning as well as wide-ranging supports (especially the development of concrete tools) to implement organizational policies and best practices were a very high priority. Advocacy, outreach and engagement were also areas of very high priority, with the view to develop industry-wide leadership. Many participants suggested that for these efforts to be effective, a coordinated effort is needed to lead this program area. Additionally mentorship, specifically informal mentorship, was identified as a very high priority with a high degree of consensus for immediate implementation. Finally, directing interventions at organizational and inter-personal levels was also perceived as “moving the target away from women,” focusing instead on building the infrastructure around tradeswomen and tradesworkers alike as well as employers, unions and other organizations through supported planning, greater capacity and improved practices.

Very high priority, mixed consensus – immediate or near future, year 1-2 (Table 3)

- INTERPERSONAL - Local event management, informal networking
- INTERPERSONAL - Professional networking events, conferences
- ORGANIZATIONAL – Workplace training, other workshops
- INDIVIDUAL – Career assessment, counseling

At the interpersonal level, participants identified local event management, informal networking, and professional networking events and conferences as a very high priority. Similarly, workplace training and other workshops as well as career assessment and counselling were endorsed as a high priority. The consensus was mixed with respect to the sequencing of those priority areas, with both immediate or near future (years 1-2) identified for implementation by the stakeholders.

High priority, mixed consensus – near future implementation, year 2 + (Table 4)

- INDIVIDUAL – Soft skills and expectation management
- INDIVIDUAL – Upskilling, technical training
- INDIVIDUAL – Continual wrap-around supports
- MACRO – Strategic engagement of target populations

The areas of soft skills and expectation management, upskilling, continual wrap-around supports as well as strategic engagement of target populations were seen as high priority. The consensus was mixed with respect to the sequencing of those priority areas, with implementation identified for the near future, years 2+. Finally, with respect to the discussion around individual-level program components, many argued that decisions for priorities for implementation ought to consider and build on existing services, focusing on specific gaps in those services or sub-groups of tradeswomen that are currently underserved.

Finally, Table 5 combines the results from Tables 2 through 4 to arrive at a graphical representation of the rankings and sequencing of the program components as identified by the stakeholders. As can be seen, a number of program clusters begin to emerge, along with their possible sequencing for implementation. Several of the macro and organizational program components could be organized as primary elements of a pilot given the immediacy of their suggested sequencing, along with some secondary ones at the interpersonal level. The interpersonal components lend themselves to integration in a pilot, possibly along with some secondary components that link to the individual and macro levels. Similarly, the individual components are a natural fit as primary services of a possible pilot, along with secondary components linked to the organizational and macro levels.

Table 2 Very high priority, high consensus – Immediate implementation, year 1

Level	Program Component	Right away (Year 1)	Near future (Year 2 – 3)	Later on (Year 4+)
Macro	Outreach, engagement and education			
	Advocacy and leadership development			
	Strategic engagement of target pops			
Organizational	Organizational needs analysis, business case development			
	Organizational supports to employers with policies and practices			
	Workplace training, other workshops			
Interpersonal	Local event management			
	Professional networking events			
	Coordinating mentorship			
Individual	Career assessment and counselling			
	Soft skills training and expectation management			
	Continual wrap-around supports to tradeswomen			
	Others: Upskilling			

Table 3 Very high priority, mixed consensus – immediate or near future, year 1-2

Level	Program Component	Right away (Year 1)	Near future (Year 2 – 3)	Later on (Year 4+)
Macro	Outreach, engagement and education			
	Advocacy and leadership development			
	Strategic engagement of target pops			
Organizational	Organizational needs analysis, business case development			
	Organizational supports to employers with policies and practices			
	Workplace training, other workshops			
Interpersonal	Local event management			
	Professional networking events			
	Coordinating mentorship			
Individual	Career assessment and counselling			
	Soft skills training and expectation management			
	Continual wrap-around supports to tradeswomen			
	Others: Upskilling			

Table 4 High priority, mixed consensus – near future implementation, years 2+

Level	Program Component	Right away (Year 1)	Near future (Year 2 – 3)	Later on (Year 4+)
Macro	Outreach, engagement and education			
	Advocacy and leadership development			
	Strategic engagement of target pops			
Organizational	Organizational needs analysis, business case development			
	Organizational supports to employers with policies and practices			
	Workplace training, other workshops			
Interpersonal	Local event management			
	Professional networking events			
	Coordinating mentorship			
Individual	Career assessment and counselling			
	Soft skills training and expectation management			
	Continual wrap-around supports to tradeswomen			
	Others: Upskilling			

Table 5 Priorities and sequencing of WIT program components: Combined rankings

Level	Program Component	Right away (Year 1)	Near future (Year 2 – 3)	Later on (Year 4+)
Macro	Outreach, engagement and education	[Dark Blue]		
	Advocacy and leadership development	[Dark Blue]		
	Strategic engagement of target pops	[Dark Blue]		
Organizational	Organizational needs analysis, business case development	[Dark Orange]		
	Organizational supports to employers with policies and practices	[Dark Orange]		
	Workplace training, other workshops	[Dark Orange]		
Interpersonal	Local event management	[Dark Yellow]		
	Professional networking events	[Dark Yellow]		
	Coordinating mentorship	[Dark Yellow]		
Individual	Career assessment and counselling	[Dark Green]		
	Soft skills training and expectation management	[Dark Green]		
	Continual wrap-around supports to tradeswomen	[Dark Green]		
	Others: Upskilling	[Dark Green]		

It is worth pointing out that when discussing these rankings and how they might be implemented, participants talked about the need to focus activities on engagement with partners, relationship development, environmental scans, and comprehensive planning in order to ensure effective and efficient delivery of any interventions. Many participants expressed that the work activities themselves in each of the program areas depend on specific subpopulations of tradeswomen and their needs, the availability of existing resources to support program areas, as well as local and regional considerations, including labour market conditions or training gaps. This latter point served to reinforce the need for resources to be dedicated to engagement, environmental scans, and further strategic planning to formulate clear objectives, targets and milestones for the proposed WIT programs or services.

2.3.2 Existing levers and resources

During this portion of the session, participants were asked to identify and describe leveraging opportunities within existing organizations that currently offer services or activities to support the noted and related WIT program priority areas. Participants were encouraged to think about existing levers and resources to facilitate the implementation and delivery of any new WIT initiatives. This exercise showed a great deal of expertise around the room and the potential to leverage and build on this existing infrastructure. In fact, during this portion of the session, multiple representatives offered organizational resources in-kind as well as their time and expertise to continue identifying and capitalizing on synergies to support existing WIT programs.

Table 6 summarizes the organizations that currently support some elements of the WIT program areas, as identified by the participants. It is important to stress that the information presented is not exhaustive. It represents initial dialogue with respect to the potential leveraging opportunities identified by the stakeholders who participated in the session, with a relatively brief discussion of the underlying mechanisms through which the program area could be supported. This process was not meant to take the place of an environmental scan, but rather it can serve as a starting point for further strategic planning. Table 6 should therefore be reviewed with those caveats in mind.

As can be seen, there are a number of existing organizations that support select components of the WIT program areas. Most of them appear to target and/or have the infrastructure to support not all, but select elements of that program area and through specific mechanisms. For example, some outreach and education is being done through published materials and, similarly, some organizational supports exist through materials and resources on safe workplaces and bullying. There are also select networking opportunities (e.g., meet-ups, social events) provided by organizations to address barriers at the inter-personal level. In some cases, such as strategic engagement of target populations or organizational need analysis and supports, based on the discussion that took place, it was either not possible to identify the leveraging opportunities or the mechanism to support that area was unclear. In general, the most comprehensive sets of services and supports appeared to target the individual-level.

Based on this high-level overview, a number relevant gaps emerged in the course of this discussion, as summarized in the following themes:

- Limited strategic guidance to lead initiatives (i.e., centralized effort)
- Limited scope of services and supports (including ability to bridge tiers)
- Limited coordination among services and supports (including information)
- Lack of tools; mechanisms limited to materials targeting the individual

With respect to the above gaps or cons, we heard that there is limited strategic guidance to lead and coordinate initiatives, which participants identified as a particular challenge at the macro- and organizational- levels. Numerous participants also spoke about the limited scope of the existing services and supports, and identified the need for interventions to better bridge services across tiers (e.g., interpersonal, organizational levels) as well as across target groups (e.g., tradeswomen, tradesworkers, employers, union leaders). Participants also identified a lack of tools to support organizations, with supportive mechanisms often limited to publications targeting individuals.

Furthermore, many participants expressed frustration at the lack of centralized and widely accessible information about the resources available to support tradeswomen. Some around the room said they were not aware of the scope of the services currently offered and voiced the perceived lack of or limited coordination between the existing programs and services. Many participants suggested in fact that there is a need to gather, synthesize, and make available information about WIT related resources relevant to all stakeholders (e.g., tradeswomen, employers). This was directly related to the need for strategic guidance to provide leadership to plan and direct WIT efforts.

Finally, outside of the major organizations listed in the Table 6, participants identified a number of other departments and programs (some of which may or may not have a dedicated WIT focus) that offer additional opportunities for leverage, including:

- Independent Contractors and Businesses Association (ICBA),
- Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation (e.g., WorkBC Centres),
- Skills Canada,
- Small Business BC, and
- WorkSafe BC

This discussion reinforced the need for a further scan of leveraging opportunities, with a focus on building synergies through dedicated partnerships to support Women in Trades programs and initiatives. Beyond a cursory review of organizational websites, this review should incorporate a comprehensive environmental scan to document and assess the services and supports that are actually being delivered including validation through stakeholder interviews.

Table 6 Existing leveraging opportunities to support WIT program areas

Level	Program Component	Organization	Leveraging Opportunities	Cons/ Gaps
Macro	Outreach, engagement and education	BC Building Trades Ministry of Education ICBA	Some through published materials Education campaigns, publications	Limited coordination
	Advocacy and leadership development	BC Building Trades ICBA	Some policy advocacy Other mechanisms unclear	Lack of strategic guidance
	Strategic engagement of target populations			
Organizational	Organizational needs analysis, business case development			Limited scope
	Organizational supports to employers with policies and practices	BC Building Trades Build Force Canada Industry Training Authority ICBA	Safe and welcoming workplaces materials Resources around bullying for individuals Other mechanisms unclear	Mostly materials targeting individuals
	Workplace training, other workshops	BC Building Trades Industry Training Authority	Media training and public speaking Other workshops	Lack of tools
Interpersonal	Local event management & Professional networking events	BC Building Trades Canadian Construction Women Women on Tools	Some events and conferences Meet-ups, social events, speakers Networking	Limited scope
	Coordinating mentorship	BC Building Trades Canadian Construction Women Women on Tools	Informal mentorship through events Other mechanisms unclear	Mostly targeting tradeswomen
Individual	Career assessment and counselling	BC Building Trades BC Construction Association (STEP) WorkBC Centers	Dispatching opportunities, placements Individualized employment supports, including career counseling	Services for specific target groups (e.g., barriered) or areas (e.g., construction)
	Soft skills training and expectation management	Canadian Construction Women WorkBC Centers	Some workshops Other mechanism unclear	
	Continual wrap-around supports to tradeswomen	BC Construction Association (STEP) WorkBC Centers	Individualized employment supports, including job search, placement, matching, and work aids	
	Others: Upskilling	Industry Training Authority	Technical training; 15 advisors across BC	

2.3.3 Program delivery options

Building on the previous discussions about priorities and sequencing of service areas along with the existing leveraging opportunities to support them, the goal of this part of the facilitated session was to discuss program delivery options for the service areas identified in the WIT report.

The facilitators presented two ends of a service delivery spectrum. On the one end, the option entailed adding more specialized programs to existing services, with multiple service providers who operate independently. On the other end, the option entailed organizing one single program delivering the full scope of services on a provincial scale, such as the one described in the WIT report. Participants were encouraged to identify other program delivery options and, taken together, to discuss their pros and cons.

When the two delivery options were presented, there was a consistent theme heard from among the participants that the model with multiple independent service providers is not favourable. There was general consensus that this model has:

- Limited ability to provide new services to address barriers across all levels
- Limited ability to improve coordination of services
- Limited ability to guide strategic planning and foster leadership to drive changes

With respect to the one-program model, the majority supported the model, with many stating that it has the potential to be effective in addressing barriers, as seen in other jurisdictions. At the same time, a number of participants identified the following cons associated with this model, including:

- High cost and limited funding sources available
- Potential challenges in utilizing and capitalizing on existing levers (e.g., duplication; competition for resources)
- Potential for lower flexibility in responding to changing conditions and/ or leveraging on opportunities in a one-program model

Stemming out of this discussion, participants raised alternative options, ranging from new program components wrapped around existing services through finite pilot projects to building formal partnerships to coordinate services. There was general agreement regarding the need for strategic use of resources, specifically the desire to target the right resources to the right areas, as informed by a robust evaluation. Several common features began to emerge referred to by multiple stakeholders as a “hybrid approach” to implementing a program matrix, and one that would encompass the following characteristics:

- A Governance Committee helps set strategic priorities and monitor results
- A managing organization coordinates contractors and deliverables
- Program components are organized based on priorities and services are implemented through subcontractors

- Subcontractors are organized in partnerships that leverage existing capacities
- Each set of program components are implemented as “pilots” with individual yet integrated evaluations

It is important to acknowledge that the discussion of delivery options was a challenging process. Many participants expressed their frustration, pointing out the challenge of discussing delivery options without knowing the amount or source of the resources to implement any new initiatives. At the same time, representatives from multiple organizations stressed their continued support and commitment to WIT initiatives, again offering resources in-kind to support ongoing work. Multiple participants agreed to meet again as part of a subcommittee to plan the next steps.

The summary of the subsequent meeting of the subcommittee follows below.

3 Subcommittee Meeting Summary

3.1 Overview

At the end of the facilitated session on January 19th, representatives from the Ministry of Jobs, Tourism, Skills, Training and Labour suggested the formation of a subcommittee to engage in further dialogue on implementation options and lead the next steps. Volunteers were solicited. A subcommittee was subsequently formed with the following members:

- Clyde Scollan, President and CEO, Construction Labour Relations Association
- Tom Sigurdson, Executive Director, BC Building Trades
- Chris Atchison, President, BC Construction Association
- Dr. Lindsay Langill, Vice President, Independent Contractors and Businesses Association (ICBA)
- Tara Fong, Manager, Industry Training Authority
- Shelly Neil, Construction Manager, PCL
- MJ Whitemarsh, Board Member, Industry Training Authority
- Rasna Nagra, Recruiter, Seaspan
- Lisa Langevin, Assistant Business Manager, IBEW 213

The first meeting of the subcommittee took place on February 8, 2017. The goal of the meeting was to revisit the key points learned from the facilitated session and to continue the discussion of the implementation options. To frame this discussion, a consolidated summary of the research findings was first presented, followed by an overview of the Sector Labour Market Partnership Program. The latter included a description of the Program's scope and objectives (addressing sector or regional labour market issues within British Columbia) as well as Program phases (sector engagement; labour market information; strategy development; implementation; and evaluation).

3.2 Discussion of Implementation Options

The core of the meeting focused on a discussion of implementation options. The three alternatives for delivery described earlier were presented and discussed in detail, with participants going over the pros and cons of each.

First, participants agreed that the option with multiple independent service providers is not favourable. In addition to the reasons that were previously raised in the facilitated session, participants noted that this option is closely aligned with the current delivery model and the status quo is no longer acceptable nor is it able to effectively address existing gaps.

Second, similar to the sentiments expressed at the facilitated session, many participants in principle supported the one-program model, such as a brand new organization modelled after programs like OAWA. In particular, participants expressed the positive aspects of stability and sustainability a program of that nature would offer. However, a number of cons were identified, including:

- Given its scope and lack of defined duration, the program would be cost prohibitive
- There are no immediate and large-enough funding sources
- Feasibility poses a challenge as it could include options of diverting funding from existing programs
- Achieving and demonstrating positive outcomes could be delayed by the need to set up organizational capacity first

Third, the hybrid model was discussed. Specifically, the group discussed what the model would look like in practice, including its duration (defined), structure (Governance Committee representing a consortium of existing organizations to provide oversights and strategic guidance), project lead (liaison with the Governance Committee and manager of contract), and funding (access to ongoing funding through demonstrated results). A number of pros were discussed with respect to the other delivery options, including:

- Access to funding sources that allow for action to take place in the short-term
- Ability to build capacity through projects defined in duration that demonstrate results
- Flexibility to respond to changing conditions and to leverage opportunities
- Relatively less time and resources required to set up organizational capacity whilst maintaining ability to set strategic guidance through the Governance Committee

After a substantive debate, taken together with the previous discussions, the group arrived at a consensus to support a hybrid model to deliver priority program components. Participants felt that this model offered the best opportunity to move towards action as soon as possible. At the same time, there was agreement to continue working together on advocating for sustainable funding to support a more permanent set of interventions over the long-term.

After arriving at the hybrid model as the preferred option for delivery, the group briefly discussed priorities for delivery. Participants made a number of recommendations to this end:

- Mentorship was identified as a program area that has the potential to have immediate benefits to tradeswomen
- The development of a database was identified as a needed component to support multiple activities, including services at the inter-personal level²

² It is worth noting that the WIT Report recommended the development of a database, guided by an evaluation framework, to support all program areas, and outlined its key features. Beyond a registry of tradeswomen, this database should indeed serve to support all of the pilot projects by providing a rich set of information to inform the type of services required, serving the dual objectives of supporting ongoing strategic planning and helping to demonstrate effectiveness.

- Pilot projects should keep the focus on addressing barriers, with the goal on retaining and advancing women currently working in the trades
- Input from stakeholders regarding the sequencing of program components should be placed in the context of both the research findings and the current needs of tradeswomen

The group agreed to continue the discussion over the course of future meetings about what priorities to deliver and, potentially, in what sequence.

3.3 Next Steps

The final portion of the meeting was dedicated to mapping out the next steps.

First, participants emphasized the need to conduct a comprehensive *environmental scan*. The group agreed to move forward on this as quickly as possible.

Second, there were multiple calls from amongst the participants for a *strategic plan*, and specifically, a thoughtful implementation strategy for all the pilots in concert and independently.

Third, participants agreed to continue the discussions regarding *priorities for delivery*.

4 Implementation Options for Pilot Projects

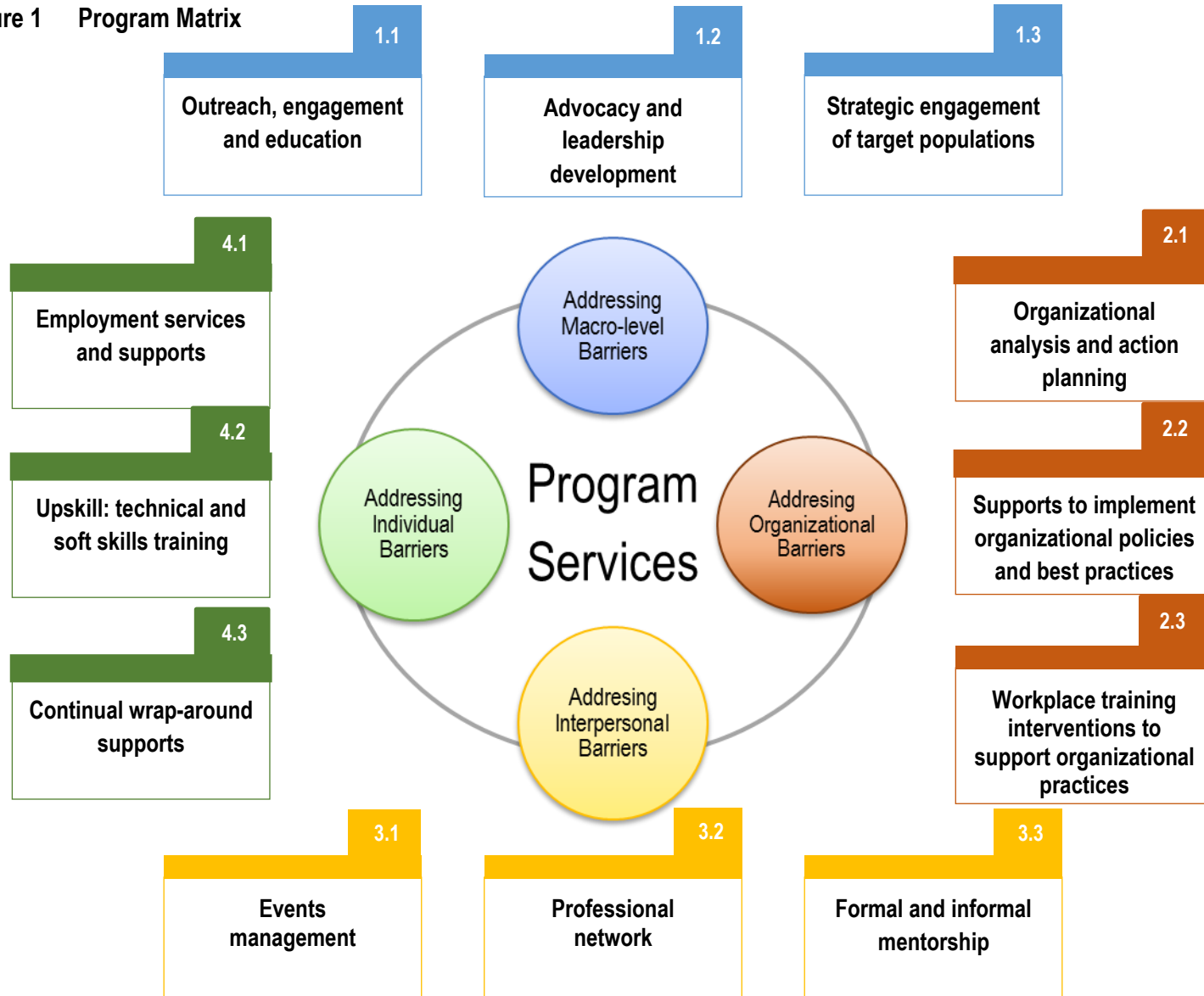
4.1 Overview

The recommendations in this section draw on results from the recently completed research along with inputs from key stakeholders collected during the facilitated sessions on January 19, 2017 and the subcommittee meeting on February 8, 2017. More specifically, the 12 program components recommended in the research report *Enhancing Retention and Advancement of Women in Trades in British Columbia*, are organized into three possible pilot projects based on the stated priorities of stakeholders, the initial dialogue on existing capacities, and the emerging implementation options. While each pilot would focus on specific service areas, they should also be structured in a connected way to provide a system of supports for tradeswomen. The coordination across the three pilot projects can be done through the Governance Committee, whose main roles are to set strategic priorities and monitor results, as well as through an overriding evaluation strategy.

The logic behind the organizing structure of the three pilots is informed by the clustering of components that emerged from the program sequencing discussed in the previous section. As well, information on existing capacity that key stakeholders provided in both meetings is also taken into consideration, although a more comprehensive environmental scan is needed to fully explore and understand leveraging opportunities.

Figure 1 provides a summary of the 12 program components. (Note: for the purposes of this section we have combined the 13th component on technical training, which emerged at the facilitated session, in order to maintain consistency with the latest draft of the research report). The subsections that follow describe the key services that could be built into each pilot project and provide some brief implementation guidelines. A preliminary list of indicators that can support program evaluation are also provided, as this is important not only for ongoing strategic planning but also for demonstrating program effectiveness – which is critical to the long-term financial sustainability of these initiatives.

Figure 1 Program Matrix



4.2 Pilot Project #1: Mentorship and Professional Networks

4.2.1 Description

GOALS: Build and maintain an infrastructure to support professional and local networking as well as mentorship opportunities for women in trades, with an emphasis on informal mentorship.

LEVEL: Interpersonal

COMPONENTS:

Primary components

3.2 Build and strengthen professional networks including through event management (conferences, career fairs, networking opportunities)

3.1 Facilitate local events in order to strengthen support networks

3.3 Facilitate mentorship opportunities for tradeswomen (formal and informal)

Secondary component

1.3 Strategic engagement of target populations (e.g., Aboriginal women)

RATIONALE (Consolidated input):

- Mentorship was an area of very high priority and high consensus for immediate implementation in year 1. Professional networking and local events management were also areas of very high priority with mixed consensus for implementation in years 1-2. These program components not only naturally fit together given significant leveraging opportunities, they are arguably dependent on one another. Engaging sufficient numbers of women in a sustainable mentorship program – be it formal or informal – will be impossible to maintain without channels to engage and recruit women – both at the local and provincial levels.
- In addition to supporting mentorship and professional development, the rationale for local and professional networking was emphasized in both meetings in that providing a venue for women to raise their issues and concerns was key to addressing longer term retention.
- It was also raised in both meetings that these program areas address key short-term needs of existing tradeswomen, with the potential to have immediate benefits

4.2.2 Implementation Considerations

- Potential to implement quickly with measurable outcomes over a 2-3 year term
- The database is needed to support the delivery of this pilot but, at the same time, could be used as a vehicle for its development

- Build on and capitalize on existing organizations and resources that have established channels and credibility (e.g., Women on Tools; BCBT)
- Address the “transient” nature of the trades through online presence; build a pool of tradeswomen others can draw on
- TIMELINE: 2-3 years

4.2.3 Evaluation

The pilot should have an evaluation strategy that incorporates key indicators to assess both the quality of the implementation and the extent of progress on key outcomes of interest. It should be designed to support both short-term planning for those engaged in this specific pilot as well as longer-term strategic planning of the Governance Committee and wider industry stakeholders. This data should be collected longitudinally, at the onset of activities (baseline) and at several follow-up intervals throughout the pilot. It should also incorporate a suitable methodology for assessing the incremental effects of program activities not simply changes in outcomes. *Examples of key indicators* are included below, which would need to be further developed prior to implementation in coordination with the Governance Committee and consistent with the sector LMP requirements.

Implementation/Output indicators:

- # of events organized, mentorship tools and resources developed;
- # of participants at event; and
- # registered as mentors or mentees.

Intermediate outcomes could evaluate the success of events and mentorship activities by measuring:

- Levels of engagement, knowledge exchange, and networking opportunities generated
- Levels of satisfaction associated with the events, activities, or mentorship opportunities, and the extent to which participants would recommend them to others;
- Increased awareness of interpersonal barriers to diversity, and ways to counteract them; and
- Attitudinal shifts in gender expectations and roles that often lead to interpersonal barriers.

Another set of intermediate outcomes could be developed to capture gains along a range of psychosocial indicators that previous research has revealed are linked with better workplace performance. These include gains in:

- Social capital and support (including mentorship and networking connections);
- Career adaptability (i.e. confidence in making career and job search decisions);
- Trust;
- Work-related confidence and self-efficacy; and
- Reduction in workplace stress.

4.3 Pilot Project #2: WIT organizational knowledge exchange

4.3.1 Description

GOALS: Create a “hub” for knowledge exchange with explicit mechanisms that aim to support:
(a) organizations in building capacity; (b) organizational analysis and action planning;
and (c) leadership development and inform advocacy efforts.

LEVEL: Macro and organizational

COMPONENTS:

Primary components

2.1 Work with exemplar employers and key industry players to not only support their organizational analysis and action planning but also develop *tools, protocols, procedures, guidelines and best practices*, which can be adopted by other organizations in the sector.

2.2 Support exemplar employers and key industry players in their efforts to expand their capacity to implement new policies and strengthen existing best practices.

1.2 Enhance the leading roles of exemplar employers and key industry players to guide leadership development and inform advocacy efforts.

1.1 Through sector-wide outreach and engagement with other employers and organizations, disseminate the tools, best practices, and resources and build channels to facilitate ongoing sharing and exchange of knowledge, fostering further leadership development.

Secondary component

1.3 Strategic engagement of target population (e.g., Aboriginal women)

RATIONALE (Consolidated input):

- These program areas were identified as very high priority and very high consensus for immediate implementation
- We learned from the research and the facilitated session that there is a need for tools and resources to facilitate organizational capacity and processes for employers.
- We learned from the research and the facilitated session that there is a need for strategic drivers for advocacy and leadership
- We heard in both meetings that a need for centralized coordination of information was key
- We heard in the facilitated session that there is a need for a well-rounded structure that “connects people,” “bridges services across tiers” and works across target groups (e.g., tradeswomen, tradesworkers, employers, union leaders)

4.3.2 Implementation Considerations

- Will need to further define the scope of the tools and supports provided but should definitely have a fundamental focus on helping organizations reduce cultural barriers that are implicit in construction and that make it exceedingly challenging for women to succeed.
- Important for this pilot to be research-driven and build on the vast experience with diversity training in the private sector.
- TIMELINE: 2-3 years

4.3.3 Evaluation

The pilot should also have an evaluation strategy that incorporates key indicators to assess both the quality of the implementation and the extent of progress on key outcomes of interest. It should be designed to support both short-term planning for those engaged in this specific pilot as well as longer-term strategic planning of the Governance Committee and wider industry stakeholders. This data should be collected longitudinally, at the onset of activities (baseline) and at several follow-up intervals throughout the pilot. It should also incorporate a suitable methodology for assessing the incremental effects of program activities not simply changes in outcomes. What follows are some examples of key indicators that would need to be further developed prior to implementation in coordination with the Governance Committee and consistent with the sector LMP requirements.

Successful implementation would be indicated by the ability of organizational staff to articulate the ways in which their capacity grew as a result of services delivered, and the ways in which the growth was tied to organizational need and business goals. At the most immediate level, alignment with needs could be evaluated in terms of:

- Satisfaction levels of staff who used the resources and services, and the extent to which they would recommend them to others. These could be assessed through short participant exit surveys.

In addition, indicators of capacity growth, such as new tools and practices developed as a result of the services outlined above, and the extent to which they are aligned with need are also useful. For example:

- Diversity strategies developed tied to business goals;
- Data tracking systems implemented;
- Organizational needs assessments completed;
- Diversity action plans completed;
- Guidelines, policies, standards, and practices developed in specific diversity-related areas outlined above; and
- Participation in an employment registry or job bank.

4.4 Pilot Project #3: Employment Liaison Services

4.4.1 Description

GOALS:

- 1) Support current *tradeswomen* with retention and career advancement through a set of wrap around services;
- 2) Support *employers* and other organizations such as unions and other non-union partners in building capacity in 4 key areas in order to recruit, hire, and advance tradeswomen. These areas include:
 - equitable recruitment, training and advancement practices;
 - organizational policies and practices to address bullying and harassment;
 - health and safety programs and policies; and
 - flexible workplace policies

A key role of this pilot is to provide a venue *bridging tradeswomen and employers* through regular engagement and follow-up, allowing them to bring forward and receive assistance with employment related issues and concerns

LEVEL: Individual and Organizational

COMPONENTS:

Primary components

4.1 Employment services and supports targeted specifically for women currently in the trades: A comprehensive and holistic suite of employment supports, including job search, job matching, job maintenance, and job counselling for women who are currently in the trades.

4.2 Upskill: technical and soft skills training: to ensure job readiness, supporting ongoing professional development and advancement.

4.3 Continual wrap-around supports.

2.3 Workplace training interventions to support organizational practices.

Secondary components:

2.1 and 2.2 Services and supports for organizations: Provide access to tools and resources (developed in Pilot #2) and facilitate their implementation by sharing best practices, offering advice and expertise, and ongoing follow-up.

1.3 Strategic engagement of target populations (e.g., Aboriginal women).

RATIONALE (Consolidated input):

- The program areas in this pilot were identified as either very high priority and very high consensus for immediate implementation, or as high priority with mixed consensus for implementation in years 2-3. They are combined together as they have dependencies and offer significant leveraging opportunities.
- We learned that there is a need for a venue for tradeswomen and employers to bring forward and receive assistance with employment related issues. The pilot keeps the goals of women's retention and advancement at the forefront through its focus on employment.
- We heard in the facilitated session that there is a need to "bridge services across tiers" and work across target groups.
- Pilot 3 is a natural extension of pilots 1 and 2, as it leverages the new services and mechanisms developed in those pilots.

4.4.2 Implementation Considerations

- The database is needed to support the delivery of this pilot. This could involve the collection of a set of information about tradeswomen as well as employers to identify needs and inform the type of services for both.
- This pilot needs to link well to the other pilots (e.g., use of those mechanisms and/or referrals).
- TIMELINE: 3 years, to allow for a) relationship building with relevant stakeholders; b) local implementation considerations, and c) establishing of pilot #1-2].
- Scope – need to determine which pieces are done in-house and which ones involve partnerships.

4.4.3 Evaluation

The pilot should have an evaluation strategy that incorporates key indicators to assess both the quality of the implementation and the extent of progress on key outcomes of interest. It should be designed to support both short-term planning for those engaged in this specific pilot as well as longer-term strategic planning of the Governance Committee and wider industry stakeholders. This data should be collected longitudinally, at the onset of activities (baseline) and at several follow-up intervals throughout the pilot. It should also incorporate a suitable methodology for assessing the incremental effects of program activities not simply changes in outcomes. What follows are some examples of key indicators that would need to be further developed prior to implementation in coordination with the Governance Committee and consistent with the sector LMP requirements.

Intermediate indicators could evaluate the usefulness of tools and resources by measuring:

- Levels of satisfaction associated with the tools, resources, and activities, and the extent to which participants would recommend them to others; and
- Increased awareness of what to expect and what it takes to succeed in the trades.

Participants might also be expected to develop gains along the same range of psychosocial indicators described for interpersonal outcomes, including:

- Social capital and support;
- Career adaptability (i.e. confidence in making career and job search decisions);
- Trust;
- Work-related confidence and self-efficacy;
- Reduction in workplace stress; and
- Participants with skill gaps may also develop skill gains.

