

## **Understanding Employers' Current Business Realities and their Impacts on Apprentice Recruitment and Training CAF-FCA Project**

### **Introduction to Focus Group and Interview Guide**

Hello, my name is Emily Arrowsmith and I am the Director of Research and Programs at the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum (CAF-FCA). CAF-FCA is a national, non-profit organization that promotes apprenticeship training. We are interested in exploring employer perceptions of apprenticeship in light of their current business realities. As you are aware, employers, like yourself, faced additional challenges in the recent economic climate. For example, COVID-19 has contributed to the decline in apprenticeship registrations and completions and has had a negative impact on apprentice employment and training especially for new first-year apprentices. Other current challenges include rising costs of inputs, supply chain disruptions for key components, materials and fuel, and shortages of journeypersons. CAF-FCA would like to speak directly to employers about these issues to provide industry-driven insights and recommendations to government. This work is being funded by Employment and Social Development Canada.

We are interested in your opinions based on your experiences and expertise as an employer who hires apprentices or has hired apprentices in the past. The focus group will take no more than 1 to 2 hours by Zoom or Microsoft Teams. If you prefer, you also have the option to do an interview via Zoom, Microsoft Teams or telephone call. Interviews will be 20 minutes. Individuals who prefer providing written answers have the opportunity to do so. Written answers may be provided to Emily Arrowsmith at [emily@caf-fca.org](mailto:emily@caf-fca.org) or at 613-235-4004 Ext 2011. It would be appreciated if written answers were provided by October 31, 2022.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you may see a summary of the focus group conversation or interview summary. You may choose not to answer certain questions. Your responses will be used only for the purpose of this research project. The results from individual interviews will be aggregated and summarized into a report before being shared. No names and

other identifiers such as organization / occupation / sector ? will be used in the final report. The interview notes will be destroyed after the project ends in April 2023.

As a thank you for participating, \$25 gift cards to Tim Hortons are being offered to employers. You may keep your gift card even if you withdraw from the study.

If you would like to withdraw from the study, please let Emily Arrowsmith know by January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023. After that date the results will be summarized into the research report and it will not be possible to remove the findings.

For more information about the study please contact, Emily Arrowsmith at [emily@caf-fca.org](mailto:emily@caf-fca.org).

Do you have any questions before we begin?

## **Questions for Employers**

### **Employer Background**

1. What sector are you in?
2. Do you hire apprentices currently? YES or NO
3. If no, have you hired apprentices in the past? YES or NO
4. What trades do you currently hire apprentices in?
5. If you don't hire apprentices currently, what trades did you used to hire apprentices in?
6. How many employees do you have working at your company?
7. What province or territory do you work in?
8. Is your company a part of a larger national or international company?

### **Apprentice Recruitment**

9. How do you find most of your apprentices?
10. Do you use any job posting websites and employment centres, etc. offered by

organizations in their region such as Job Bank, CCQ, or platform sites like TaskRabbit, LinkedIn to find apprentices?

11. Do you hire apprentices during certain times of the year? If yes, what are the months where you hire the most apprentices?
12. How do the needs of your business for apprentices vary by Level/Stage of apprenticeship completion (e.g. Level I, Level II), if applicable?
13. How long would you generally expect an apprentice to remain with your business following their recruitment?

### **The Impact of COVID-19**

12. How have the disruptions caused by COVID-19 impacted your ability to hire and train apprentices?
13. How have those challenges and experiences changed since the end of 2021?
14. Given the current economic situation, do you think hiring apprentices is still a good decision for your business? Why or why not?
15. Do you think there is a business case for apprenticeship? Why or why not?

### **Barriers to Hiring and Training**

16. Given the current business realities such as labour shortages, inflation and rising interest rates, what are your concerns when recruiting and training apprentices, in particular apprentices newly registered in the last two years?
17. Are there specific challenges in your region and sector? How have you coped with these challenges?
18. Are there barriers to finding journeypersons willing to mentor and/or train apprentices as part of their job/role with the company?

### **Skill Needs**

19. What emerging skills do you currently need related to:
- Digital skills
  - Integrating technologies and practices relating to climate change, carbon neutral and environmentally friendly building practices
  - Soft or employability skills
  - Essential Skills or Skills for Success (i.e., math, reading, writing, problem solving, adaptability)
20. Which skills will be most important to you in the:
- Short term
  - Medium term
  - Long Term
21. Are there any barriers that present challenges to you in helping to equip your workforce with the skills needed for the future? If yes, what are they?

### **Scope of Trade**

22. If employer is small or medium sized, are you able to offer full scope of trade experience necessary for apprentices to receive certifications as journeypersons?

### **Hiring and Training Equity Deserving Groups**

23. What are your perspectives, experiences and concerns with respect to hiring apprentices from equity deserving groups, including:
- Women
  - Indigenous
  - Racialized Canadians (e.g., Black Canadians)
  - Newcomers

- Persons with disabilities
- LGBTQ2+

What are some the measures/actions have you taken to recruit members of these groups and/or to make them feel welcome in the workplace?

24. What additional resources or supports could help employers to promote diversity and inclusion in their workforces and to hire and retain more easily apprentices from equity-deserving groups?

### **Financial Incentives**

25. What are your perspectives on the impacts, effectiveness and usability of financial incentives and supports from federal and provincial governments, or from other sources to hire and train apprentices?
26. Where do you seek, and expect to find, information on supports for apprenticeship?
27. At what point in the apprenticeship cycle do you need more support?
28. Is \$5K a sufficient financial incentive to motivate you to access the program (i.e., is it worth their time and effort?) What is the minimum government financial support necessary to incentivize employers to hire a first-year apprentice?
29. What do you think of the focus, eligibility criteria and parameters of the Apprenticeship Service?

(For those who do not know, the Apprenticeship Service is a federal program where small and medium-sized employers may receive \$5,000 for hiring first-year apprentices (Level 1/ Block 1) . An additional\$5,000 is provided for those who hire from equity-deserving groups. In addition to financial incentives, employers will be able to access other supports, such as ‘welcoming workplace training’, making it easier for them to hire and retain first-year apprentices. The program is slated to end in 2024.)

30. What additional supports, including non-financial supports, could be valuable to employers? At which point(s) in the process/business cycle would these supports be most

useful?

31. Is there any additional comments you would like to add?

**Thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview.**

**Your participation is greatly appreciated.**