

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Factors tied to apprenticeship participation and completion are often framed as barriers. Yet it is equally important to identify and understand those factors that facilitate, expedite and support the process. To fill this information gap and investigate the positive determinants of apprenticeship success, this report seeks to answer “What are the winning conditions for apprenticeship?” Using data from ApprenticeSearch.com and interviews with apprentices and employers, this report explores conditions that influence apprenticeship success including educational background, age, trades related training, willingness to travel, and previous exposure to the trades.

The core purpose of the research detailed and analyzed in *Winning Conditions for Apprenticeship* is to provide insights on how job-seekers can successfully navigate the many challenging and fragmented pathways into the apprenticeship system and how employers in turn can better attract and retain qualified apprentices. *Winning Conditions for Apprenticeship* is aimed at addressing the needs and concerns of the many apprenticeship stakeholders in Ontario, including: students, job-seekers, trades persons, industry partners, post-secondary institutions, and government agencies.

If we begin to see the winning conditions of apprenticeship as the flip side to those barriers that challenge access and completion of apprenticeship, several themes emerge.

The winning conditions of apprenticeship identified and explored in this report can be grouped under four main themes:

1. Access to employment opportunities

Finding employment opportunities is a key entry point into apprenticeship success. The initial matching of apprentices and employers is a crucial factor—it allows the rest of the apprenticeship process to take place. Apprenticeship is a hands-on, learn-on-the-job system, and requires the successful matching of apprentices and employers to ensure applicants have an opportunity to apply what they learn in a classroom setting to a professional platform. As this report will later explore, successful apprentices are those who have also found and established strong mentorship relationships with their employers.

2. Prior-trade related experience

Prior trade-related experience clearly matters for apprenticeship success. The data collected by ApprenticeSearch.com shows that successful applicants have tended to be experienced ones, but this experience can come from a variety of places including past work, apprenticeships or a combinations of both. As the interviews conducted suggest, acquisition of early trade-related experience is often important for apprenticeship completion and is further enhanced by individual passion and commitment.

3. Trade related education

Some interviewees spoke of limited applicability between school curriculum and job demands, but overall, experiences with in-school training were positive. Accordingly, of those applicants who had found employment matches through ApprenticeSearch.com, those applicants best-prepared for apprenticeship success were more likely to have post secondary education. Yet, higher levels of education does not necessarily appear to assist applicants in finding apprenticeship positions.

4. On-the-job training and mentorship

Apprentices interviewed for this report who were most positive about their apprenticeships were those who felt that they had received a good level of training from their employers. And for their part, the employers interviewed who were most satisfied with their employees felt that these apprentices were committed to their apprenticeships and willing to learn.

A handful of employer interviewees expressed more critical perceptions, namely that administrative procedures were more supportive in the past when government representatives visited employers in person; that journey-person-to-apprentice ratios are too restrictive (particularly in the construction sector); and that base requirements for skilled trades may be out of step with actual job requirements.

The winning conditions of apprenticeship span activities among various stakeholders, primarily apprentices, employers, educational institutions and government agencies. Apprenticeship success therefore depends upon all partners pulling in the same direction to strengthen the apprenticeship system in Ontario. To do this, we must first understand the factors that positively influence participation and completion: the winning conditions of apprenticeship.