



HR TOOLS AND SERVICES

Talent Attraction and Management Toolkit for Energy-Efficient Building Employers

RETROFITTING RECRUITMENT AND ON-THE-JOB MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

October 2022

Acknowledgements

This report was funded by the Government of Alberta's Workforce Partnerships grants program. We are greatly appreciative of the support.

The Province of Alberta is working in partnership with the Government of Canada to provide employment support programs and services.



We would also like to thank those who have provided ongoing advice and feedback throughout the development of the Talent Attraction and Management Toolkit, which includes the following individuals and organizations:

- Tanya Doran, Stantec
- Rachelle Patterson , BILD Alberta
- Kelsey Brasil, Efficiency Canada
- Jesse Row, AEEA
- Ken Gibson, Alberta Construction Owners Association
- Carla Klassen, Clay Graphic Design Inc.

Last but not least, ECO Canada expresses gratitude to Cheryl Knight & Associates Ltd. for undertaking this research and developing this toolkit.

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Introduction

Alberta's building sector hires for occupations of varying levels, types, skill requirements, and work settings to design, construct, manage and retrofit high-performing commercial and institutional buildings and multi-unit residential buildings (MURBs). However, energy-efficient building sector employers in the province face heightened labour costs, competition from other sectors and provinces, an aging workforce and skill gaps. While the fundamental skills to complete high-performing buildings are essentially the same as those in the construction industry, different expectations, process changes and culture shifts create additional challenges. Many building sector companies are also small employers, with comparatively tight profit margins and few staffing resources, making it more challenging to invest resources into attraction, retention and workforce development.

Building sector employers were surveyed through May and June 2022 to understand their energy efficiency talent issues, staffing plans and practices. Reported HR issues include:

- Labour and skill shortages
- Worker turnover and productivity declines
- Managing labour costs and worker expectations
- Education and training gaps
- Competition from other sectors
- Challenges of building a multi-disciplinary team
- Retirements and loss of knowledge
- Regional differences in talent availability
- (Lack of) diversity in the workforce

This **toolkit** is designed to help employers build their talent attraction and development capacity in offices, sites and plants. It includes resources and tips to ensure recruitment and on-the-job management practices are modernized or retrofitted to meet the needs of today's labour market, improve retention and future-proof these practices. Additional tools and resources are provided at the end of each section and in the appendices.

Concrete recommendations and actions have been selected, gleaned and adapted from current research and other resources. Although developed with small and medium-sized employers in mind, this practical guide can be utilized by companies of all shapes and sizes, helping them save time and money while achieving better results.

Retrofitting Recruitment for Employers in the Energy-Efficient Building Sector

As employers seek to build a larger talent pool to draw from, they may find that their traditional recruitment processes are no longer working as effectively. It's time to retrofit your recruitment and attraction!

This section covers the activities to retrofit your recruitment and attraction practices to help you find the best-qualified candidates for site, plant and office jobs. This includes promoting your company brand and expanding the sources of talent you draw from, including under-represented workers and displaced workers from other sectors.

Why Retrofit Recruitment and Attraction?

Alberta's job market is rapidly shifting and becoming more complex. The job market is especially tight for core and emerging occupations and skills needed for high-performing buildings.

Recruiting takes a lot of time and effort. Failing to adapt recruitment and attraction practices to the tight labour market and future hiring requirements creates risks.

KEY REASONS TO RETROFIT ORGANIZATIONAL RECRUITMENT AND ATTRACTION PRACTICES:

- ✓ Recruiting with speedy, high-quality approaches reduces costs and achieves better results
- ✓ Speeding up recruitment means cutting out inefficient and outdated processes and reducing costly delays
 - Aim to shorten the average time of 43 days from a job opening to an accepted offer
- ✓ Taking a longer-term approach to talent acquisition helps you effectively manage the ebbs and flows in the job market
- ✓ Improving industry appeal through messages that the building sector and its careers are changing and play a key role in climate change

Notwithstanding the labour market cycle, we need to get the word out that the sector offers meaningful and diverse choices to young people trying to kickstart their careers and seasoned workers looking to improve their career resiliency.



Employers typically offer higher compensation packages to attract new talent in an overheated job market. To mitigate salary equity and retention issues among existing staff, employers could consider offering temporary or permanent salary adjustments.

Better Recruitment and Attraction Practices

Adjust standard recruitment processes to meet your unique talent needs

1. Different practices are warranted for different roles and skill requirements:
 - Candidates with diverse backgrounds and competencies will have different expectations when it comes to the recruitment process
 - Tailor recruitment based on the unique characteristics of each talent segment. See [Find Workers Needed by the Sector](#) section
2. Assess your recruitment processes from end to end to create an engaging, fast, and tailored candidate experience:
 - Make your application process easy and straightforward
 - Assess bottlenecks and look at the number of stages it takes to go from identifying a candidate to hiring them – don't let candidates "sit at one stage" for too long
 - Move candidates of interest swiftly through the next steps
 - Assess which of the recruitment channels and candidate sources provide the best and worst results
3. Soft skills are essential for most jobs in the sector:
 - Identify the soft skills most important to each role and evaluate these skills during recruitment. See section on [Evaluating and Building Soft Skills](#)
 - Include desired soft skills in job descriptions or postings to encourage candidates to provide examples in their job applications



Standardized hiring processes may not be effective for:

- **Hard to fill construction roles:** candidates may not be readily available, and jobs may not appeal to younger audiences
- **Niche roles or those requiring experienced professionals:** standardized hiring practices may result in a poor candidate experience (e.g., candidates transitioning from another industry may need to be "sold" on the energy-efficient building sector)
- **Emerging occupations:** limited pool of qualified talent

Leverage your employee promise to engage new hires and retain existing employees

1. Define your company identity – be transparent about who you are and aren't. Ensure your brand is reflected in your career page
2. Highlight reasons for working in the company and industry and ensure the benefits of working with your company are clear and consistent. See section on *Market the Reasons to Work in the Sector and Your Company*
3. Describe your hiring process on your career page
4. Make it clear what types of employees you're looking for

Improve your candidate communication

1. Unclear and inconsistent communication through the hiring process will turn off candidates and may even result in poor online reviews
2. Do not limit responses to only candidates who qualify for the next stage of the recruitment process:
 - This is an outdated practice and may damage your reputation
 - There are automated tools that can help you keep candidates in the loop

Build a larger talent pool to draw from

1. Develop a talent pipeline
 - Leverage work-integrated learning such as internships, job shadowing and apprenticeships
 - Build strategic recruitment relationships through partnerships with communities, high schools and colleges
 - Participate in hiring fairs and industry information events to highlight the jobs and skills in demand and the benefits of working in the sector and its changing culture
2. Create a database of candidates interested in working with your company that you can tap into when you need to fill a position
 - This includes current and previous applicants, employee referrals, and previous employees with skills you value
3. Ensure you're reaching diverse talent pools and looking for ways to build a culture of inclusion in all types of work environments that values diverse talent and experiences (see *Recruiting to Diversify Talent* section)
4. Assess the transferability of skills from other occupations and sectors (see *Transferability Assessment Methodology* in Appendix A) and take stock of advantages your sector offers compared to those with high transferability
5. Participate in events and partner with organizations that work with targeted talent pools
6. Leverage available financial supports (see *Finding and Using Financial Supports More Efficiently* in Appendix B)

Expand the hiring responsibility

1. Today, candidates want a more immersive experience rather than the traditional approach of dealing entirely with HR
 - They want to know what it might be like to work with you, what type of environment they'll work in, and who are their potential colleagues
2. Restricting the hiring responsibility could overload specific people or teams, limit the candidate experience, and demotivate interested candidates

Assess your Recruitment Process

Look at the steps involved in your company's recruitment process and assess if any of them are causing delays or excluding candidates. Typical recruitment steps and common pitfalls include:

Typical Recruitment Process Steps	Common Pitfalls
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Identify the current and near-term needs to hire a new employee 2 Decide on job requirements, and write the job description 3 Post recruitment ads to attract new candidates 4 Screen candidates – look at resumes, shortlist candidates, conduct interviews 5 Select the best candidate 6 Conduct reference checks and prepare an offer 7 Onboard and train the new hire 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Lack of planning for both your current and future needs and how you're going to fill those needs 2 Lack of clarity about the unique job requirements and expectations for every vacant position 3 Failing to alleviate roadblocks and delays that might lead to lost productivity – Can tasks be automated? Can red tape be cut? 4 Lack of internal communication – parties involved in recruitment need to meet regularly to identify the best approach for a position and remove roadblocks





SPOTLIGHT: 2022 Talent Pulse Survey

In a 2022 *Talent Pulse Survey*, Alberta-based building sector employers identified energy efficiency roles they were recruiting for, including a number of core and growing occupations and skills. These include:

-  Energy managers, modellers, specialists, and advisors***
-  Design and engineering professionals**
-  Construction management and onsite supervisors**
-  Construction and related trade workers**
-  Quality control and assurance specialists*
-  Building managers and operators
-  Information technology (IT) specialists*
-  Regulatory specialists and officers*
-  Commissioning professionals
-  Others (e.g., project managers, energy control systems, researchers, etc.)

*Employers reported they are currently or expect to be challenged to find qualified candidates

Market the Reasons to Work in the Sector and Your Company

Improving the sector's perception and increasing awareness of its diverse opportunities and changing culture should be a key element to a company's talent attraction and retention strategy. This can help advance the efforts made by building sector associations and champions, such as the Alliance of Energy Efficiency in Alberta, BILD Alberta, Alberta Construction Association, BOMA, Efficiency Canada, Canada's Green Building Council, and many others.



Industry associations and companies must work together to promote the jobs, career pathways, wages and training available in the sector to attract and retain talent now and in the future.

Promote the Benefits of Working in the Sector

Substantial investments into energy efficiency and retrofitting means a variety of jobs that can offer meaningful choices to:

- 1 **young people trying to kickstart their careers**
- 2 **diverse talent pools such as women, Indigenous peoples, visible minorities, etc.**
- 3 **seasoned workers looking to improve their career resiliency**

To shift how the building sector is currently viewed by many and change the narrative, companies and associations can reinforce the following **key messages**:

The building sector is:

- **Progressive and technologically advanced**
 - Increased digitization and automation are having a widespread impact on the building sector and its workforce, as more and more building projects focus on achieving energy efficiency goals
 - Industry employers are interested in attracting a more diverse and inclusive workforce, including women, youth, visible minorities, Indigenous workers and transitioners from other sectors
- **Working to change and modernize its culture**
 - The sector embraces lifelong learning for all occupations to keep pace with the acceleration of technologies, equipment, materials and processes
 - Soft skills are essential for advancing energy efficiency, which requires greater integration and collaboration across all disciplines involved in the building lifecycle
- **Helping address climate change and protecting the environment**
 - Energy-efficient buildings play a key role in shaping a low-emissions future, and the sector workforce is critical to achieving this goal

- **Needing workers in a variety of occupations throughout the building life cycle**
 - The sector is expected to grow and already faces labour and skill shortages (growing and emerging occupations are summarized in a subsequent section)
 - An aging demographic in professions such as those in the construction workforce, including trades and engineers, means new entrants to the sector are needed to replace retiring workers
 - Building operator roles are becoming more multi-faceted as they are involved in increasingly complex processes, technologies and skill requirements to ensure buildings meet energy use performance goals
- **Offering career progression and learning opportunities**
 - Many workers are required along the building life cycle and at entry, intermediate and senior levels for all types of jobs
 - Expanded knowledge levels are needed in climate change resiliency, including regional considerations such as seismicity; low-emissions technology, equipment and materials; renewable energy and storage; and the circular economy as it relates to buildings
 - Upskilling and continuous learning is needed to remain current on regulations, standards, certifications, and metrics
 - Digital skills and literacy are expected to be increasingly required for all existing occupations to maximize the benefits offered by advanced technologies



Evaluate and Promote the Benefits of Working with Your Company

Follow these four steps to create your company’s “Employee Promise”, which is all about how you make your company stand out as a great place to work:

1 Assess the benefits and reasons to work with your company using the *Employee Promise checklist* in Appendix C

2 Identify the practices you believe your company handles better than most other sector companies of a similar size

- List the top 3 or 4 practices from the *Employee Promise checklist*
- Remember to be honest, recognizing what you are and what you aren’t

3 Ask your current employees to review your results

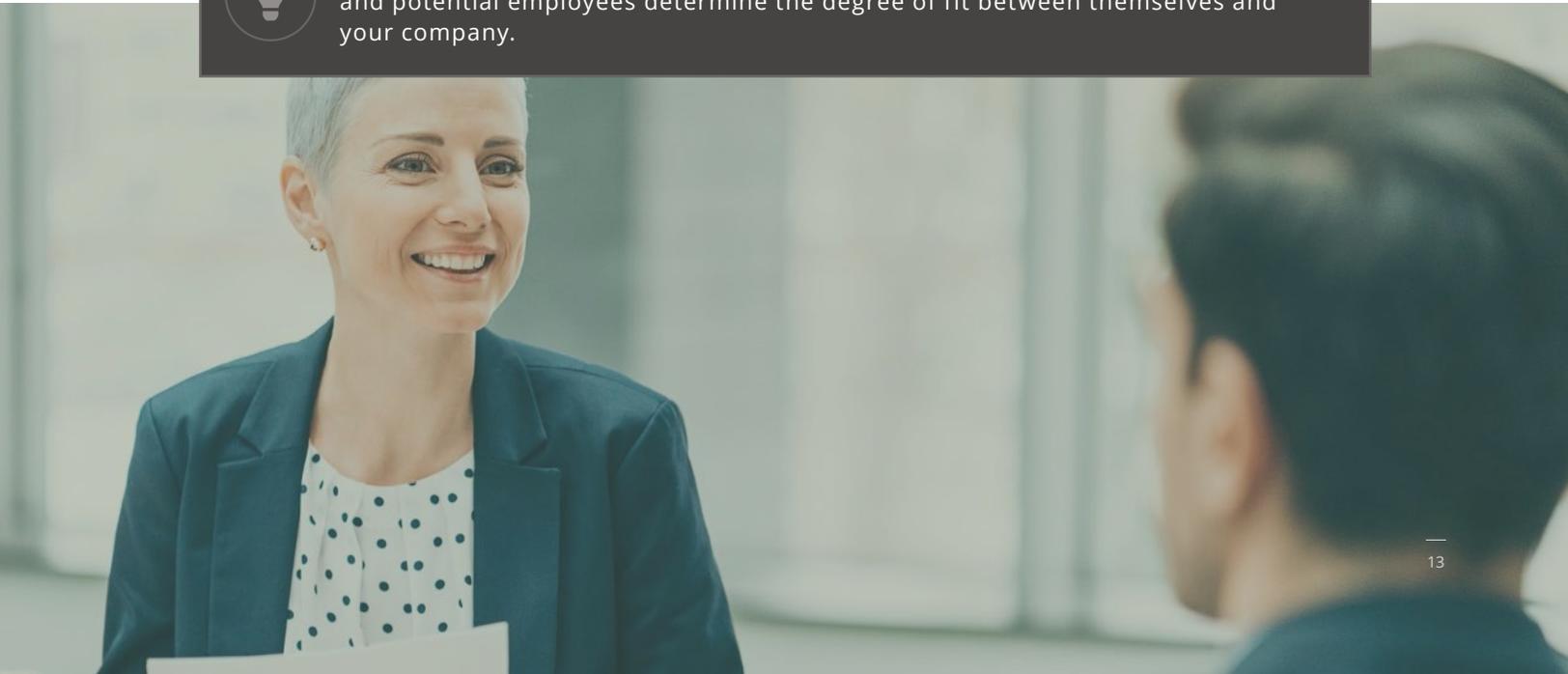
- Do they agree with what you believe is your company’s employee promise?
- What do your employees get out of working with your company?
- Why do they stay?
- What’s most important to them about their workplace?

4 Promote what you do exceptionally well for your employees to help you to attract individuals who are seeking what you have to offer

- Include your employee promise in your company website, job postings, and other company promotional materials and activities



Clearly stating and branding your benefits as an employer helps current and potential employees determine the degree of fit between themselves and your company.



Find Workers Needed by the Sector

There are several “retrofit” ways to find the workers you need.

Consider the following talent sources when recruiting for **core occupations in energy efficiency**:

Workers from other sectors

- Look for workers from other parts of the building sector and other sectors that are likely to have transferable skills and an interest in being involved in energy efficiency
- Sectors that are shedding workers are a perfect place to start once you have determined there is a reasonable degree of transferability to the energy-efficient building sector (go to [Appendix A](#) for more information on *Transferability Assessment Methodology*)
- Ensure you have a strong employee referral program to lower your recruitment costs and improve retention

Current workforce

- Support continuous learning so your workers are keeping pace with advances in technology, equipment, materials and processes so their skills will grow with your organization
- Involve occupations that are not often included in ongoing professional development, such as trades and building operators, so the practice of lifelong learning is applied to all workers
- Expand energy efficiency knowledge of key staff. Examples include: climate change resiliency; low-emissions technology, equipment and materials; renewable energy and storage; and the circular economy for buildings
- Emphasize and support current knowledge of regulations, standards, certifications and metrics
- Upgrade key skills:
 - Digital skills and literacy are expected to be needed for all occupations
 - Procurement skills, knowledge and approaches to changing supply chains and relationships for energy-efficient equipment, materials and technology
 - “Building-as-a-system” understanding and skills required for retrofitting
- Implement effective succession planning to ensure an available talent pipeline (see [Additional Resources](#) at the end of this section)

New grads and apprentices

- Develop a new grad hiring program that includes experiential learning practices to get them up to speed quickly, e.g., co-ops, internships, apprenticeships, mentoring

New Canadians with international skills and education

- Expand on the pools of talent you draw from and bring diversity into your company with skilled workers trained outside of Canada
- Develop relationships with organizations that can support the screening and hiring of internationally trained workers

Plan to augment recruitment with extended workforce development when hiring for **occupations needing specialized skills and experience in energy efficiency**. Finding qualified candidates for these occupations could be challenging due to:

- Lack of or limited availability in training
- Smaller candidate pool to draw from – these skills are more commonly found in specialized consulting firms and contracting companies and departments within large firms
- Fewer opportunities to hire entry-level candidates or provide on-the-job training, as skills are generally acquired through years of experience
- Lack of occupational standards and credentials

Consider the following approaches to finding suitable candidates:

- Identify connections with selected training organizations for opportunities to provide input into curriculum development and hire program graduates
- Support apprenticeship opportunities
- Integrate mentorship into your employee development practices

Regardless of the hiring need and recruitment approach, you should look into leveraging available hiring and training grants when finding and developing workers (go to [Appendix B Finding and Using Financial Supports More Efficiently](#)).

Recruiting to Diversify Talent

Enhancing workplace diversity helps fill labour and skill gaps. Progressive companies also view diversity as a strategy to improve innovation, creativity and productivity and bring novel perspectives into the business.

Diversifying and expanding talent pools requires targeting new audiences and usual sources of hires.



Companies that support and encourage equitable, respectful and diverse workplaces will be more attractive to a wide range of talent pools.

Actions to improve access to diverse workers:

Recruitment practices

- Write inclusive job postings using gender-neutral words (like “they” rather than “he/she”)
- Avoid unintentionally screening out qualified new Canadians early in the process
 - Newcomers may have gaps in their resumes
 - Resume screening software can save time, but it can also eliminate those who use unconventional formatting and terminology
- Explore hiring needs that can be addressed with skills and experience from workers from another sector (see *Transferability Assessment Methodology* in [Appendix A](#))
- Partner with organizations, such as not-for-profits and educational institutions, that support the training and recruitment of diverse workers. For example:
 - [Women Building Futures](#) has a variety of ways you can get involved
 - Communities across Alberta have organizations that specialize in helping job seekers in equity-deserving groups
- Participate in bridge-to-work programs, co-ops and internships to support job creation and work-integrated learning. Leverage funding to de-risk the process (go to [Appendix B Finding and Using Financial Supports More Efficiently](#))
- Promote the reasons why the sector and your company are great places to work and develop an engaging career
 - Educate job seekers on the building lifecycle, the role played by your company, and the range of opportunities this affords
 - Provide information about the culture in the sector and your company to challenge assumptions that might be a barrier

Workplace practices

- Ensure equitable work practices that are part of your company culture are highlighted on your website, job postings, social media messages and other promotions
 - Assess how you foster a respectful and inclusive workplace using the Respectful and Inclusive Workplace Toolkit (BuildForce Canada, 2018) for the construction industry
- Identify jobs that can be done remotely, either 100% or hybrid
 - Remote work is a way of expanding your hiring and recruitment reach to other parts of the country and candidates unable to commute to office or job sites due to personal situations or family commitments
 - Ensure remote or hybrid workers are included in critical meetings and are encouraged to speak and participate
 - Read the recommendations for hybrid workplaces in a recent report Benefits and Challenges of Hybrid Work (Conference Board of Canada, 2022)

Additional resources:

Human Resources Industry Toolkit. go2HR. (2022, June 10). Retrieved from <https://www.go2hr.ca/human-resources-industry-toolkit>

Working with employers - alis. Government of Alberta. (2022, October 19). Retrieved from <https://alis.alberta.ca/inspire-and-motivate/working-with-employers/>



Retrofitting On-the-Job Management Practices

Worker retention and turnover continue to be one of the most significant challenges cited by employers in the *2022 ECO Canada Building Sector Employer HR Survey*. The way employees work, including where, when, why and with whom, has changed, and that will continue over the coming years. These shifts, along with retention risks, are challenging traditional management practices. Four disruptive trends are at the root of these changes. The following table outlines these trends along with innovative ideas to enhance on-the-job management practices.



Small businesses may have the edge over larger ones in adapting to the changing workforce. They are already accustomed to agile responses to business demands and have more personal relationships with their employees.



Trends	Better On-the-Job Management Practices
<p>1 Working for purpose and passion, not just money</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate your company’s vision, mission and a project’s purpose and ensure employees know their part in them • Help managers invest the time to get to know their employees, what motivates them to do their best work and their strengths and development gaps • Offer employees opportunities to make a meaningful impact by creating initiatives that resonate with their values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – (E.g., Support employees in group activities that contribute to a community or charitable organizations) • Encourage employees to examine how the company impacts the environment • Provide career and succession planning resources as they will increase employee commitment to an organization
<p>2 Accelerated use of technology in work processes, including management practices</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in upskilling and reskilling – it will cost less than hiring a new employee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Leverage available financial resources (see Appendix B Finding and Using Financial Supports More Efficiently) • Establish an environment of continuous learning, regardless of age and position. Ensure leaders are modelling this behaviour • Offer digital and career development to intermediate employees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – These workers are skilled at what they do, and effort is needed to ensure they don’t get stuck in one role • Help employees build essential soft skills and qualities that machines cannot replicate, such as communication, professionalism, and organizational skills
<p>3 Remote or hybrid work – assess the benefits of remote work, when appropriate</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rather than resisting the change, build your remote work policies and capabilities in a way that complements the needs of your business and the job requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Respond to shifts in the expectations of office, site and plant employees and balance these with getting the work done – You should be transparent about why some positions are not eligible for remote work by formalizing arrangements in a policy • Every job deserves some flexibility, even if remote work isn’t an option <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – This can include starting the day earlier, taking extra time off for a personal appointment or leaving early • Establish ways to strengthen social and emotional connections among co-workers and reduce friction that differing levels of flexibility can create <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Dispel myths that working remotely means “you can do whatever you want” – Both types of work arrangements have their challenges • Block off time for team meetings and “in-person” events so employees can plan around them <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Virtual teams have limited opportunities to get to know one another and can miss out on healthy social interactions • Assess health and safety considerations surrounding remote work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Workstation design and arrangement – Working alone; set up a contact schedule – Impacts on workers’ compensation and occupational health and safety requirements • Recognize additional supports that might be needed for diverse groups to establish relationships and networks • Ensure managers focus on effectively communicating and leading virtually
<p>4 Demands from employees for increased flexibility</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the tools to support flexibility in work hours and locations • Give employees more ownership over their workday by assigning tasks with due dates and establishing key performance indicators and being open-minded about other ways of completing tasks • Enhance family-friendly policies • Support managers to practice empathy and responsiveness to their employees beyond the domain of work

Better New Hire Onboarding Practices

Retrofitting new hire onboarding practices means going beyond orientation to benefits, technology, safety policies, building access, and integrating new employees into your organization. It should also fulfill two key objectives:

- 1 Provide a general introduction to the company, its culture, values, vision and policies**
- 2 Orientation to the department and roles**

Onboarded employees will have the knowledge they need to excel in their roles and meet the company's expectations faster. By aligning employees with their functions, they feel needed and important to the organization and will be less likely to quit.

There are five ways you can improve on your existing onboarding process.

Develop a pre-employment onboarding process

- Send a welcome email and include new-hire paperwork and helpful information to make their first day less overwhelming
 - E.g., where to park, what to wear, work arrangements, start time, what to expect on the first day, etc.
- Set up workspaces, equipment and systems, PPE for job sites, safety training and building or site access ahead of time
- Use technology to improve the efficiency of onboarding processes
 - E.g., automated reminders for managers of steps, short surveys of new hires to check in on their adjustment and assessment of their onboarding
- Prepare the team with an announcement introducing the new hire and their role and background

Help employees build connections and learn about how the company and their role contribute to a low-emissions future

- Provide a company listing of staff contact information and an organizational chart
- If the new employee is from one of the targeted groups (women, youth, immigrants, Indigenous people, persons with disabilities and transitioning workers from other sectors), your approach should be more personalized to ensure they feel welcomed and supported
- Introduce new hires to their team members and key managers. Ensure this includes senior leaders
 - A lack of established relationships is a common retention risk
- Discuss the company mission, vision and values and how they contribute to addressing climate concerns
- Conduct an office, facility or site tour

- Assign a mentor or buddy to help navigate company systems and culture for at least the first 30 days
 - If the new hire is a newcomer to Canada, ask them if they want a mentor who has shared a similar experience
- If you're onboarding several employees in the same period, consider setting up a new hire "affinity" group to share experiences and provide support in adapting to the company and the work culture. For example,
 - Younger employees may benefit from a network of other recent hires who are of a similar age
 - If the employee is a newcomer to Canada, introduce them to other employees who were once newcomers

Ensure managers engage with and support new hires

- Set up one-on-one time - a new employee's manager is one of the most influential people that contribute to their success
- Share expectations of their role, department and team goals and company vision and mission
- Set up a structure for managers to follow to get their new hire up to speed and develop a supportive relationship
- Make introductions to other managers and offer opportunities to meet

Set clear goals, communicate about performance and provide development support

- Employees need to understand how to be successful in their new role and how their performance will be measured
- Be clear about what is expected from the employee
- Empower new employees to think independently and describe how they can contribute to decisions in your company
 - This will not only improve their engagement from the start but will also contribute to a culture of innovation and continuous improvement
- Hold regular check-in discussions
- Establish a plan for ongoing training and development of technical, digital and soft skills
 - Include experiential learning and ways to transfer knowledge of more experienced employees to new hires through job-shadowing and hands-on training
 - For newcomers to Canada, evaluate if language classes are needed

Ask for feedback and input

- Proactively improve your onboarding process by asking for feedback
- Reinforce a culture that encourages dialogue and constructive feedback

Better Practices to Improve Workplace Culture and Support Diversity and Inclusion

For the building sector to position itself as an attractive career destination, it will need a renewed focus on improving the work environment and culture. This will complement initiatives to improve diversity and inclusion.

Workplace culture is embedded in on-the-job management practices that build trust and engagement of employees, contributing to lower turnover and an environment where employees want to perform, speak out and offer ideas. A culture where involvement and input are valued is an environment that also supports safety. The building industry's safety culture is a natural starting point to include diversity and inclusion as core elements of its workplace culture.

Suggestions to retrofit workplace culture:

- 1 Update your company culture and leadership mindsets so that all employees feel safe, seen and heard in your work environment**
 - Surveys and discussions can be used to gauge where employees stand with your current culture and changes that can be made
 - Highlight the importance of an inclusive environment and how this aligns with the basic tenets of a safe environment
- 2 Designate a company contact for diversity-related issues and support**
- 3 Work with operations, plant or site managers and supervisors to develop and support diversity initiatives and ensure acceptance beyond head office**
- 4 Gather and share success stories to promote diversity and inclusion in your company**

Evaluating and Building Soft Skills

Soft skills are needed for every job, are highly transferable to any position, and are increasingly crucial to the energy-efficient building sector. A 2021 ECO Canada report, *Assessment of Occupational and Skills Needs and Gaps for the Energy Efficient Buildings Workforce*, provided an analysis of the occupational skills needs and gaps related to energy efficiency occupations and revealed soft skills necessary to the sector:

- People management needed for more integrated, collaborative work processes
- “Building as a system” mindset entailing analysis, decision-making, collaboration, relationship management and communications skills
- Negotiations, communications and facilitation skills
- Problem-solving in an integrated environment
- Working with people from different cultures

Evaluating Soft Skills

Assessing soft skills generally starts during the interview process. Develop thoughtful interview questions that require candidates to pull from their personal experiences in the workplace to highlight their soft skills. [The Indeed Career Guide](#) suggests the [STAR interview response technique](#). You can use it as a guide to developing effective questions to ask applicants concerning:

SITUATION: “Share circumstances about a situation you dealt with in the workplace and the unique challenges it presented you with.”

.....

TASK: “Discuss your involvement in the situation and how it made you feel.”

.....

ACTION: “Outline how you responded initially and what action solved or placated the issue. Did you involve others? If so, why?”

.....

RESULT: “Describe the outcome of your actions. What behaviours were present (by you and others who contributed to the outcome)? Are there data (statistics, sales numbers, etc.) that show your results were positive and created a path forward?”

Building Soft Skills

Treat soft skills as you do technical skills and foster an environment that reinforces their value, application on the job, and contribution to growth and career advancement. You can build soft skills using the following approaches that don't require extra time or money.

1. Take an Immersive Approach

Centring soft skills in your workplace invites employees to improve holistically and continually. Immerse employees in “learning by doing” relevant to their role and provide opportunities to test their skills at varying levels. Performance management, including weekly one-on-one coaching sessions, can open

2. Create a Culture of Mentorship

Mentoring can improve bench strength and nurture a team culture to support soft skill development. This doesn't require a formal mentorship program. Instead, it's more about a mentorship mindset in helping each other grow. Create an environment and support tools that help people share their expertise with others.

3. Make Soft Skills Tangible

Even though studies prove that soft skills differentiate high performers from the rest of the pack, these “talents” have been historically devalued as intangible. Determine the soft skills that are important to roles in your organization by thinking about your most successful employees and assessing the traits that make them high performers.

4. Offer Continuous Feedback and Practice

Training and development programs are great, but building new skills needs practice and feedback. Early exposure to real situations, including failures, shows employees the difference between their perception of their skills and where they stand based on results and feedback. People need practice, feedback and time to course-correct to develop new skills, especially if they're not second nature to them.

5. Set the Example and Share

When leaders show they are also learning soft skills and encourage their teams to focus on their development, it becomes part of the fabric of company culture rather than a mere program. The company can also encourage leaders to bring their experiences and observations on a soft skill topic to brown bag sessions or regular meetings to drive home the message and underline their importance.

6. Integrate Learning into the Flow of Work

Employees must be able to apply all types of skills within the context of their job. The process of constant reinforcement and learning in the flow of work turns hard and soft skills into actual capabilities that help employees perform at their highest level.

7. Culturally Align Soft Skill Development

Take a step back to understand which soft skills are valued in the organization and how they should be approached culturally. Start by defining which soft skills are important, clarifying how they support the organization's strategy, and addressing skills gaps. This aligns employees and managers in the "why" of soft skills development.

8. Enable Ongoing Soft Skills Training

Training on soft skills can be ongoing throughout the year. Managers can incorporate short training sessions during group meetings and regular one-on-one meetings. They can start a meeting by discussing a specific soft skill so everyone can learn and contribute. Cross-training and content training can incorporate soft skills development.

Retrofitting Employee Departures

There are three typical employee departure scenarios:

- 1 **Voluntary termination or resignation (including retirement)**
- 2 **Involuntary termination**
- 3 **Layoff due to shortage of work**

Regardless of the reason for departure, it will likely cause some disruption if not well handled. Retrofitting employee departures limits disruption and organizational risk and maximizes opportunities for building sector employers.

Departing employees can be a source of referrals as they are likely to be re-employed by another company in the sector, and, who knows, they could decide to come back to your company! The critical ingredient to cultivating departing employees as a source of future talent includes your treatment of them throughout the departure experience. Here are better practices for employee departures:

1. Understand the nature of the exit and have a plan for how to handle it

- Is there an opportunity to address the departure reason and change their decision?
 - E.g., Offering a leave or part-time or contract employment?
 - A salary increase may be a partial solution, but it is not usually the core issue

2. Provide a memorable departure

- Treat employees with respect regardless of the departure reason
 - They could return or refer others to the organization!
- If the employee has particularly valuable skills, you may want to find a way to keep in touch with them

3. Collect turnover data through an exit interview

- Gather information about issues you can address to prevent further turnover

4. Ensure compliance and protect your assets

- Abide by regulatory and legal requirements
- Put in measures to protect company data, equipment and systems security

5. Prevent productivity issues

- Ensure you understand the employees' responsibilities and work in progress so that you can transition it to another employee
- Communicate with colleagues and external clients in a timely manner and clarify continuity plans

6. Keep the door open

- Show your appreciation and respect by the way you approach their departure
- Close the employment relationship on a positive note, even in the case of involuntary terminations
- Offer to be a reference unless it is an involuntary termination

Additional resources for on-the-job management of employees.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Transferability Assessment Methodology

Step-By-Step Guide for Conducting Occupational and Sector Transferability Assessments

This document explains the methodology used in the *Energy Career Transferability and Employment Resource* adapted for use in the Energy Efficient Building sector to assess the transferability between sectors as well as occupations and skills within those sectors. It was developed by PetroLMI (a division of Energy Safety Canada) with the support of the Province of Alberta, working in partnership with the Government of Canada to provide employment support programs and services.

While the *Energy Career Transition and Employment Resource* focus on the transferability between unemployed and under-employed oil and gas workers and other sectors within Alberta's economy, the methodology can be used to assess transferability across all talent pools and sectors. Similarities like the work environment and industry type will improve the transferability of skills and occupations. For example, there will be better transferability for occupations from one sector to another within heavy industries as compared to workers moving from industrial to commercial environments. Occupations that are typically found in field or site environments will be more transferable to jobs in similar environments.

This document supports you in conducting a transferability assessment of the "foot-in-the-door" requirements for occupations within your sector that are similar other sectors, yielding a reasonable degree of transferability. These are the minimum qualifications, skills and experience employers typically seek to enter an occupation.



This transferability methodology will be helpful to you as an employer to:

- **Assess the opportunity** to address hiring needs for talent with skills and experience from another sector.

Assessing Sector Transferability

The assessment of transferability between sectors takes three criteria into account. If you are looking to recruit workers from another sector you are likely to have greater recruitment and retention success if there is a medium-to-high transferability rate across all three criteria.

- **Technical transferability** - similarities related to the use of equipment and technology, technical knowledge and certifications required, regulatory environment, etc.
- **Nature of work transferability** - similarities in work arrangements, workplace culture, type of business, work environments, etc.
- **Value proposition transferability** is the likelihood of workers accepting an employment offer based on work location, compensation, benefits, career development opportunities, etc. While the pay may vary from sector to sector, this criterion recognizes that employees will often place as much value on other aspects of a job offer

Hiring an employee from a sector with medium or low transferability to the building sector will require additional employer support to help the employee fit in and improve their retention. This can include orientations to the workplace culture and business environment differences and other on-the-job training and mentoring.

Methodology steps – Sector transferability assessment

Methodology step:	How to:
<p>1 Rate the transferability from another sector as Low, Medium or High based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical transferability • Nature of work transferability • Value proposition transferability 	<p>Review job postings and descriptions of jobs in other sectors for information on technical qualifications, nature of work and value proposition for similarities to the requirements of your company</p>
<p>2 Assess that there is likely excess talent supply in the sector signalled by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • News stories about layoffs, closures, cost-cutting or slowdowns • Changing regulations that challenge the viability of the sector • Government programs that eliminate or reduce the market for the products of the sector 	<p>Follow industry association articles, news and company announcements</p> <p>Gather intelligence from your networking activities with other companies and sectors that are undergoing transitions and agencies working with displaced workers, such as recruitment firms and employment support agencies</p>

Assessing Occupational Transferability

The table below provides definitions to help to evaluate occupational transition from a sector assessed to have medium-high transferability into the energy-efficient building sector.



Methodology steps - Occupational transferability to jobs in energy efficient building sector

Methodology step:	How to:
1 Assess what it would take to transition to jobs from another sector as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct • Refocus • Reboot 	Research job qualifications and work environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review job postings and ads • Network with employers or employees in targeted sector and recruiters
2 Identify “foot-in-the-door” requirements that you require or could be obtained for selected occupations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundational qualifications, skills, experience and/or aptitudes 	Research job qualifications and work environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review job postings and ads • Network with recruiters and employers, industry associations or employees in targeted sector
3 Assess your interest and willingness to support upskilling if occupational transferability is a refocus	Consider the cost and effort required to support training or education to support a career change into energy efficient building sector

Appendix B: Finding and Using Financial Supports More Efficiently

Finding and securing financial support from government programs is a way to reduce operating costs for businesses of any size, but it takes time and effort. It is a misconception that it's free money and that there is one place to go for funding. There are various programs from different government agencies, and no single entity is solely responsible for the administration and delivery of funding. Each program is run independently and has specific qualification criteria and goals. You will need to research to see if there is anything for you. And prepare for the typical funding formula:

SPEND SOME MONEY = GET SOME MONEY BACK

Here are some handy tips for hiring grants, wage subsidies and other employment-related grants, such as training support.

Funding sources will be tailored to the federal and provincial labour market and economic priorities and include incentives to grow activity in specific sectors or skill areas and participation of specific target audiences in the workforce.

The links offered below are examples of what is currently available. These will change with programming shifts.

You can learn about new programs by monitoring government announcements through the media or subscriptions to government news releases such as Alberta Government News and Statements: [Alberta News Subscriptions](#)

Federal Programs

Business Benefits Finder:
Search tool you can customize to your needs powered by Innovation Canada
[Business Benefits Finder](#)
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Canada-Alberta Job Grant:
Training program where an employer applies on behalf of their present or future employees for eligible training costs.
[Canada-Alberta Job Grant](#)
.....

Provincial Programs

Workforce Partnerships Grants:

Eligible organizations with common labour market needs can get funding to support workforce initiatives.

Workforce Partnership Grants

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Sector/Skill-Specific Programs

Construction New Talent Grant Program:

Support Work-Integrated Learning placements with wage subsidies to hire current post-secondary students and recent grads for up to 6 months.

Construction New Talent Grant Program

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Alberta Construction Association Trade Pathways:

Connect unemployed and underemployed young Albertans with Alberta construction companies through paid work experience programs. Alberta Construction Association in partnership with End Poverty Edmonton

Trade Pathways

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Apprenticeship Services Program:

Make it easier for small to medium-sized enterprises to hire first-year apprentices in Red Seal trades

Apprenticeship Services Program

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ECO Employment Programs:

Summarizes training and wage subsidies for environmental jobs.

ECO Employment and Wage Subsidies

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Environmental Foreign Talent Development Program (EFTD):

Aims to address and remove the barriers to employment that are faced by highly skilled newcomers to Canada.

Environmental Foreign Talent Development Program

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Audience-Specific Programs

International Youth Internship Program:

Upcoming new program to watch for; currently seeking agencies who can assist with improving participation of youth in labour market.

International Youth Internship Program

.....

Using Financial Supports More Efficiently

Here are some common steps and information requirements that will help you with the application process for a grant or funding application. As mentioned above, each program will have their own application requirements. If possible, assign responsibility for monitoring and assessing funding opportunities to an employee who has access to the information required to complete applications.

1. Employer Assessment of Eligibility - review the program guide and FAQ's:

- *Program focus* – sector/skill, organizational type, audience
- *Funding description and amounts* – employment (full-time, intern), portion of wages, training support (percentage of training and types of learning supported)
- *Eligibility* - business size, location, type and industry, excluded businesses (often restricted to Canadian- owned or Canadian subsidiaries)
- *Target audience demographic* – wages for new hires that might be limited to industry-related positions or training for existing employees or new hires, audiences such as youth, women, foreign talent, persons with disabilities
- Time periods for applications and funding

2. Employer Completes Application

- Gather and document information related to the eligibility requirements in the program guide
- May also require a detailed job description and a training or development plan

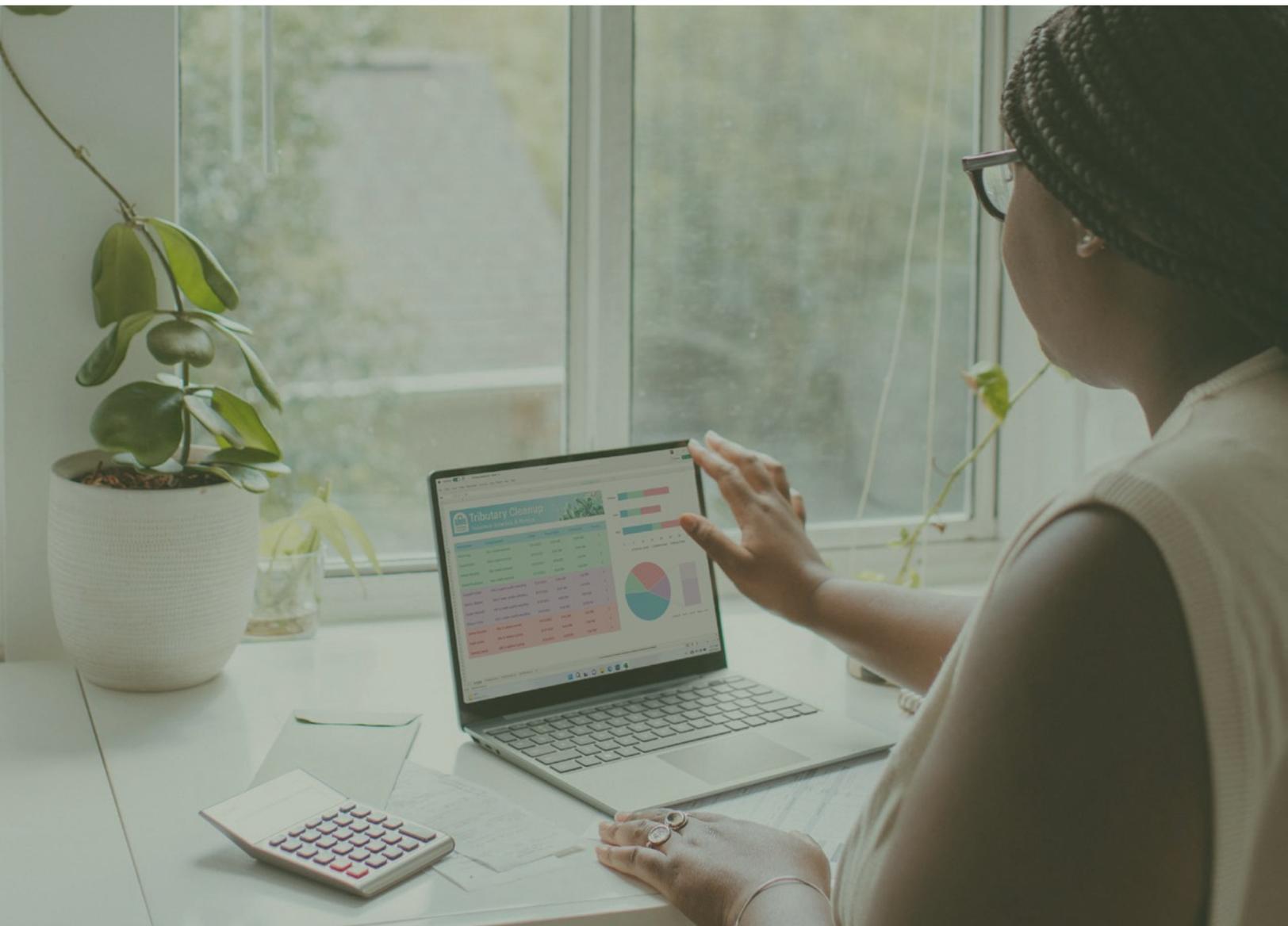
3. Funding Agency Reviews Application for Approval

4. Employer Fulfills Requirements for Receipt of Funds

- Period to hire an employee
- Description and source of training
- New hire or trainee information and position type
- Proof of employment

5. Recording-keeping and Reporting during Program

- Progress reports and final reports on outcomes and results
- Submission of documents such as paystubs and signed agreements
- Records of employer contributions
- Survey information from participants (intern, new hire, trainee, etc.)
- You may be required to report subsidy amounts on tax return



Appendix C: Employee Promise Checklist

To develop your “Employee Promise” evaluate the benefits of working with your company.

Check off all which accurately describe your company:

- Our workplace supports equitable work practices, respect in the workplace, diverse cultures and responsible environmental practices.
- Our workplace is safe.
- Senior management is trustworthy.
- There is a good balance between work and personal/family time.
- Pay is fair and meets market standards.
- We have a sense of pride and accomplishment in our work.
- Adequate job training is provided.
- Our benefits package is fair and comprehensive.
- Our work is challenging and interesting.
- Employees have good relationships with their supervisors.
- We focus on developing the skills and abilities of our workers.
- There are career advancement opportunities.
- Co-workers are friendly and supportive.
- We give recognition for a job well done.
- We provide a comfortable physical work environment.
- We give our employees autonomy in deciding how and where to do their job.
- We offer flexible hours and work schedules.
- We give our workers a say in workplace decisions.
- _____
- _____
- _____



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