

# Employer Consultations Thunder Bay District



**Local Employment**  
Planning Council

September 2018

# About the Local Employment Planning Council

The North Superior Workforce Planning Board is one of eight Local Employment Planning Councils in the Province of Ontario. The Local Employment Planning Council for the Thunder Bay District brings together key stakeholders in Northwestern Ontario. It connects employers, industry associations, sector groups and other employer groups with appropriate employment and training services to address workforce needs.

The purpose of the LEPC pilot is to drive local approaches in the planning and delivery of employment and training services through community engagement at the local level. The LEPC aims to:

- Improve employer participation rates in employment and training programs;
- Improve rates of service coordination amongst local service providers; and
- Improve integrated local planning with Employment Ontario and non-Employment Ontario service providers.

Please visit our website for more information about the Local Employment Planning Council

[www.nswpb.ca/lepc](http://www.nswpb.ca/lepc)

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Local Employment Planning Council (LEPC) for the Thunder Bay District, the North Superior Workforce Planning Board, our Directors, supporters, donors, partners, the Government of Canada or the Government of Ontario. Quotation with appropriate credit is permissible.

The information presented in this report is current at the time of printing.

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# Executive Summary

Service Coordination for Employers was identified as a priority based on the results from the previous years' EmployerOne Surveys. The EmployerOne Survey is a tool that collects information annually on a range of workforce challenges and issues, including labour turnover, hard to fill positions, recruitment difficulties, and current and future skill shortages. The survey tool gathers information about real time labour market information from local employers in the Thunder Bay district.

The Local Employment Planning Council (LEPC) reviewed all the data and feedback gathered in the EmployerOne Survey and prioritized the needs of local employers. In the 2016 survey results employers indicated that they lacked information regarding the available services, programs and incentives delivered by service providers. The LEPC responded to these local needs by implementing employer consultations into the annual business plan for 2017-2018. The LEPC acting as a hub for employers completed this action plan and met this deliverable.

In November 2017, the initial EmployerOne group consultation took place along the Highway 11 corridor in Greenstone. Employers were placed into 3 groups, they were introduced to the mandate of the Local Employment Planning Council (LEPC) and reviewed the set agenda. LEPC staff initiated discussions, facilitated the dialogue and recorded the conversations which are contained within this report. A similar consultation with employers took place in January 2018, along the Highway 17 corridor in Marathon, utilizing the same methodology, questions and the results are contained within this report. Two additional employer consultations were scheduled to take place in Thunder Bay in February 2018; however, due to poor employer response the delivery method was changed. The consultations were conducted one-to-one with employers which increased the length of the project and required additional resources from the LEPC. Results are presented throughout this report in aggregate form by sector specific details to protect the privacy of local employers.

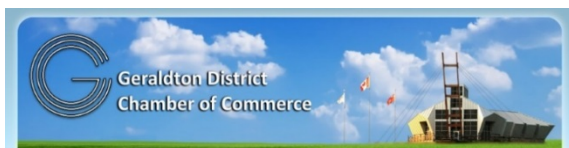
Employers who attended the EmployerOne consultations represented a cross-section of employers and included employers who had completed the EmployerOne Survey and employers who had not previously participated in the survey. Although employers represented a wide range of industry sectors they described many of the same organizational challenges. To complete the consultations, the LEPC staff members travelled through-out the district and Thunder Bay, calling on community partners to assist with getting the message out to employers about the importance of attending the consultations. By conducting the consultations the LEPC gained a more in-depth understanding of the challenges that employers face in their businesses and have confirmed that employers do have a lack of awareness of the programs, services and incentives that are available to them to support their businesses.

Additionally, the data collected from the 2016 EmployerOne Survey identified gaps relating to coordination with service providers and employers understanding of the available services, programs and incentives. This led LEPC staff to organize an Industry Engagement Session which allowed service providers an opportunity to present their programs and services to employers in Thunder Bay. Employer feedback from the Industry Engagement Session revealed that employers had a positive experience and acquired greater knowledge of the initiatives and services. The Industry Engagement Session allowed employers to network with service providers and the success

of the session confirmed the need for and benefits of the event and we intend to host future sessions.

## Acknowledgements

The Local Employment Planning Council would like to acknowledge all community partners for supporting this initiative and bringing the Local Employment Planning Council consultations to their communities. We would like to extend our gratitude to our partners:



We would like to extend our sincere appreciation to all local employers. It is with your participation, feedback and ongoing contributions that we can address the needs of the Thunder Bay District workforce. We would like to thank the members of the LEPC for their support and guidance on this and all other projects.

# EmployerOne Survey

The EmployerOne Survey is a survey of employers from the Thunder Bay District designed to collect information annually on a range of workforce challenges and issues, including labour turnover, hard to fill positions, recruitment difficulties, and current and future skill shortages. The EmployerOne Survey is one of the primary resources for real time labour market information from employers in the Thunder Bay District.

Utilizing the information collected from the EmployerOne Survey, the LEPC has responded to the needs of employers in the Thunder Bay District by developing the following initiatives:

- ✓ Apprenticeship campaign Live Life Hands On, a series of local promotional videos to encourage youth to consider the skilled trades as a viable career option.  
[www.livelifehandson.ca](http://www.livelifehandson.ca)
- ✓ Baakaakonaanan Ishkwaandemonan- Opening Doors for You, an employer recognition program focused on inclusive workplaces welcoming Newcomers and Indigenous people.  
[www.openingdoors4u.ca](http://www.openingdoors4u.ca)
- ✓ Employer Consultations, providing employers in the Thunder Bay District with presentations from local service providers about education, training and employment programs available to support their businesses.

## Employer Consultations

With increased employer engagement and an increase in employer participation in the EmployerOne Survey each year we have heard repeatedly that the LEPC needs to share the results and findings of the previous year's survey. Employment Ontario and Non-Employment Ontario service providers have expressed the desire to integrate survey findings into the planning of their programs and services to improve and maximize service delivery and coordination for client outcomes.

To increase the number of employer responses to the EmployerOne Survey our stakeholders have made the following recommendations to:

- ✓ Inform employers of the purpose of the EmployerOne Survey;
- ✓ Encourage employers to complete the survey;
- ✓ Provide employers with assistance to complete the survey;
- ✓ Distribute the results of the survey to employers; and
- ✓ Ensure the survey results are effectively communicated to decision-makers and the public.

As a result of the employer recommendations, the LEPC acknowledged these priorities and integrated them into the 2017-2018 business plan.

The deliverable was to utilize the EmployerOne results from the survey to have further discussion with employers in the Thunder Bay district. The consultations held in Greenstone and Marathon occurred in group settings and the Thunder Bay consultations involved one-on-one meetings with employers. It is important to note that two separate group consultations were planned for Thunder Bay, but due to a lack of confirmed attendance by employers one to one engagement occurred to gather information from employers. The questions utilized at the consultations are included in Appendix 1 of this report. The format and questionnaires used for each of the employer interactions was conducted in a similar way to be able compare the results. Employers that participated in the consultations were given the overview of the survey and the specific 2016 results for each discussion point. The employers were willing to provide input and discuss each of the results which provided insight and valuable information. Through consultations and outreach activities, the LEPC has the opportunity to meet with stakeholders in the communities including job seekers, community organizations and employers and we get to hear directly from them on current issues. The LEPC acting as a hub for employers can also share what we know and resources at our disposal which is valuable to all partners. Through the consultations the employers gained a better understanding of the services available and it is anticipated that employers are more likely to reach out to Employment Ontario and other service providers to utilize funding initiatives, programs and the services available to them.

*"I would recommend the Industry Engagement Sessions as it was done in a timely fashion and very informative."*

*Bart from Gridlink*

## EmployerOne Survey Consultation Results

The following EmployerOne Survey results represent the survey findings collected in the year 2016-2017.

EmployerOne survey results revealed that between **22% and 35%** of new hires did not complete a high school diploma.

Focus group employer participants conceded that many new hires had not completed their Ontario Secondary School Diploma. Employers further indicated that candidates often did not meet the skill requirements for the position, lacked experience and the desire to complete the required work.

Employers recommend increasing on-the-job training opportunities, job shadowing and more apprenticeship opportunities available to employees.



**56%** of the employers surveyed stated work ethic, dedication and dependability were the top three competencies desired in their employees.

An employer from the mining sector indicated that higher levels of training and skills development will be required for the future.

Employers recommend an increased focus on cooperative education. This would permit potential employees to acquire job skills, and it would allow employers to assess employee job compatibility.

**54%** of EmployerOne Survey respondents indicated applicants did not meet the desired job qualifications.

Employers indicated that the lack of qualified applicants and employees presents a barrier for them in maintaining and growing their businesses.

Employers recommend introducing employment opportunities to grade 7 and 8 students by providing them with the required skills development and training pathways to meet occupational demands in the labour market.

**70%** of the employers indicated their number one recruitment method is word-of-mouth.

Employers primarily use word-of-mouth as a recruitment method, but agree this restricts their reach and limits recruitment from other geographical areas. In smaller communities, recruitment challenges exist because the majority already know one another. This can be challenging for job seekers who have poor reputations and inconsistent work histories. Additionally, nepotism can impact the hiring process. Employers using word-of-mouth agree that this recruitment method is not effective when higher skills and qualifications are required for more sophisticated positions.

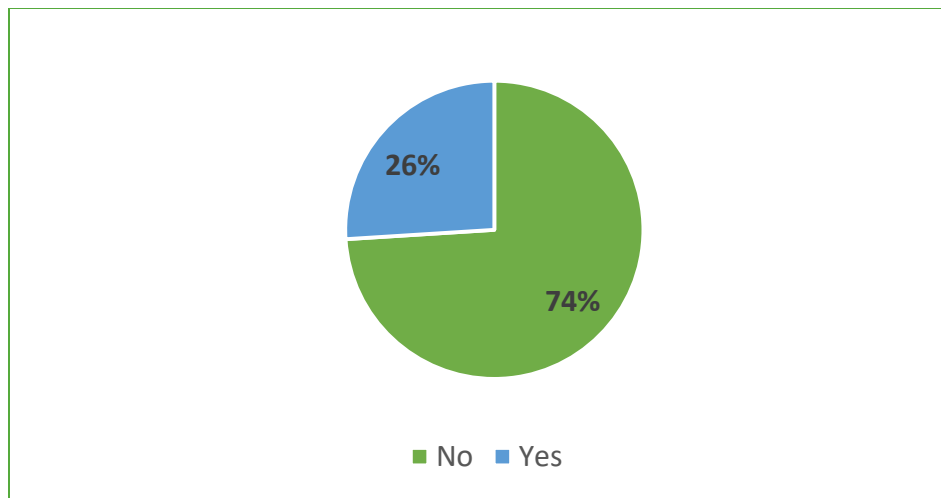
Some employers are limited to using this recruitment method as they lack the skills to advertise on websites or, in some cases, the financial ability to advertise.

Employers expressed the need for technological “know-how” to place advertisements on websites, etc. Employers also indicated that it would be helpful if a recruitment support officer/agent could work with them directly to meet their business needs.

*“As a new business owner, I was surprised to learn what free services were available to businesses!”*

*.....Rejeanne from Bedlam*





There are free employment service agencies to support employers with their recruitment needs in the Thunder Bay District.

Employers reported accessing the services of Anishinabek Employment and Training Services (AETS) and Kiikenomaga Kikenjigewen Employment and Training (KKETS). Employers also used the free employment services of Employment Ontario Services including MTW Employment Services (MTW), YES Employment Services (YES) and Northwest Employment Works (NEW).

Employers indicated they had positive experiences with the candidates referred to them by the agencies. Employers that used the free employment service agencies indicated that the process to access these services required time and effort by the employer.

### **51% of the employers surveyed use Job Boards as a method of recruitment.**

Employers reported that local service provider job boards were a great way for job seekers to be informed of local employment opportunities.

Employers recommended that free employment services agencies develop a more streamlined application process and that they more actively engage with employers.

The LEPC held Industry Engagement Sessions to improve connections between local service providers and employers. The Industry Engagement Sessions held by the LEPC garnered positive feedback from employers, and future sessions are planned.

### Only 6% of employers in the Thunder Bay District applied for the Canada Ontario Jobs Grant.

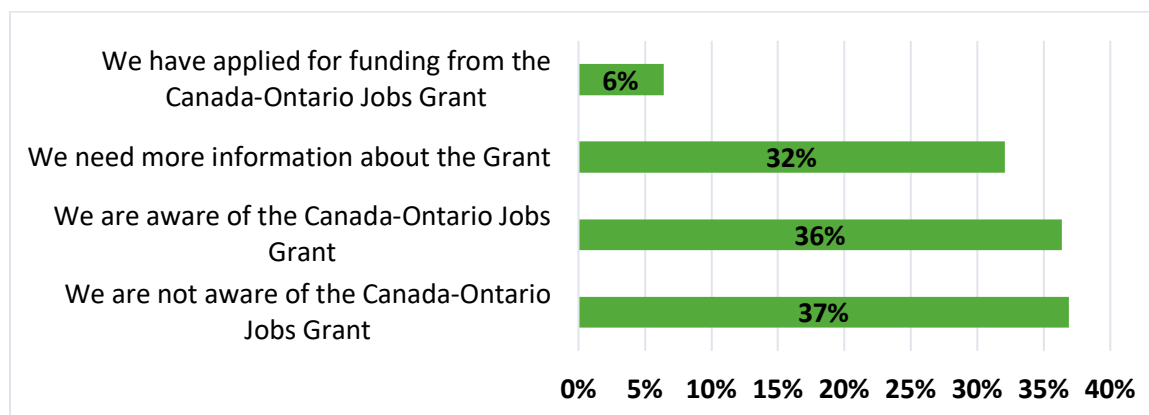
Over the past months, the LEPC has been promoting the Canada Ontario Jobs Grant (COJG) to employers through outreach efforts and Employer Engagement Sessions.

At an employer consultation, a large mining company shared that their organization uses the COJG employee training program and that this program helps support their organization and maximizing training dollars. Many of the smaller employers indicated that they do not have the capacity to grow their business, so they do not use COJG funding.

The [Canada-Ontario Job Grant \(COJG\)](#) is a provincial funding program that offers training grants to employers. Companies are eligible to receive funding to purchase third-party business training programs, including training for in-demand skill sets.

Training is expected to improve employability and the value that employees can provide, including new hires in these training sessions can maximize funding potential. To access workforce development funding through COJG, employers must operate in Ontario and have adequate insurance during the training program.

Training programs provide benefits to trainees, such as an improvement to their role or wage, or permanent employment in the case of new hires who need training to contribute effectively.



### 32% of the survey respondents requested more information about the Canada Ontario Jobs Grant.

As a result of the LEPC Employer Consultations, the Greenstone Economic Development Corporation agreed to host a future event to promote the COJG to employers. The LEPC plans to continue to promote programs and services available to employers (including COJG) during outreach activities aimed at building organizational capacity for employers.

*"Knowing what is available to me to grow my business is great!"*

*.....Geoff from Blue Harbour Financial*

## 12 % of the survey respondents identified ‘other’ as a recruitment method.

Many employers at the Greenstone and Marathon consultations identified the need for an alternative approach to employee recruitment, outside of methods like word-of-mouth, job boards and government employment centres.

Employers identified a need for a recruitment officer/agent to engage directly with those who are unemployed or soon to be job ready. They stressed the importance of notifying the public of the availability of jobs, not just in Geraldton, Longlac, Hearst and Marathon, but also within the municipality of Greenstone and areas outside of Marathon, such as Terrace Bay, Manitouwadge, Nipigon, Schreiber and the First Nation communities in the area.

## 40% of employers surveyed stated that they do not provide any workplace-relevant training to students or future workers.

There is a need to develop and expand apprenticeship opportunities, and for employment agencies and employers to support such programs. This is a logical next step to follow co-op education programs that are currently available through local high schools.

In 2018, the LEPC prepared an ‘exploration’ proposal for the Ontario Centre for Workforce Innovation to support an Apprenticeship Navigator position to address the general lack of apprenticeship programming among employers and job seekers. The Navigator would introduce employers and potential apprentices to the resources available to them. We will continue to source funding to support such a position as we believe it would be of benefit to both employers, job seeker and the economy.

*“I have a greater understanding of the programs, services and incentives available to me as a result of the session.”*

*.....Jerry from Taranis Training*

# Conclusion

Consultations revealed the need for increased communication and greater interaction between service providers and employers. It is evident that many employers are unaware of programs like the Canada Ontario Jobs Grant (COJG), Graduated Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (GAGE), Economic Development and Innovation initiative, Cooperative Education program and the financial incentives available to help sustain, support and expand their businesses. It was also noted by several employers that with the increase in minimum wage, they are now faced with the challenge of having to spend more time on day-to-day operations and less time on business planning. Additionally, new employers noted that they had minimal interactions with Employment Ontario agencies and were surprised to learn of the various programs available to them.

Employer participation was limited in the most recent employer engagement activities by the LEPC staff for the EmployerOne Survey and Employer Consultations. Employer participation in the LEPC activities appeared to be better received in the smaller communities surrounding Thunder Bay compared to the employers located in the City of Thunder Bay. This could be attributed to the additional demands placed on employers and managers due to minimum wage increase. Additional considerations that may have impacted employer participation could be timelines, survey fatigue, the timing of the survey, costs and resources available.

The conversations with employers for the EmployerOne consultations and the Industry Engagement sessions were very positive. Employers need to be supported with sourcing the information about services and ongoing support to connect with the available service providers. As a result of the employer recommendations and positive feedback during the one to one discussions the LEPC piloted an Industry Engagement Session with four Service Providers in Thunder Bay. Employers were invited to participate in a fast-paced information session which included four 10-minute presentations including a question period. The presentations included information on the Canada Ontario Jobs Grant, Cooperative Education, Economic Development and Innovation and provided an overview of the funding incentives available to employers. The employers in attendance at the Industry engagement session can be identified by sectors which included:

- ✓ (22) Utilities;
- ✓ (23) Construction;
- ✓ (44) Retail;
- ✓ (52) Finance;
- ✓ (61) Educational Services; and
- ✓ (62) Health Care.

When asked to provide feedback on the session, employers reported they developed a greater understanding of the services available and recommended the session be available to employers. New employers in attendance suggested it would be helpful to provide these sessions for all new business owners to guide them and to assist with building capacity within their business. The Industry Engagement sessions were very successful and future sessions are planned to bring employers and service providers together to support workforce development in the Thunder Bay district.

## Appendix 1 – EmployerOne Survey Focus Group Questions



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### EmployerOne Consultation Questions

1. The EmployerOne Survey reported that 57% of candidates who applied for positions did not meet the skills requirements advertised for the position.
  - i) Is this a recruitment challenge that your business has experienced?
  - ii) Do you have any suggestions related to this challenge?
2. The EmployerOne Survey results indicated 70% of the businesses use “word of mouth” method for advertising job vacancies and for recruiting candidates.
  - i. What are some of the challenges you have experienced using this method?
  - ii. Are there any other methods that you have utilized in searching for appropriate candidates?
3. The EmployerOne Survey results identified that 74% of the businesses surveyed did not utilize the “free employment services” that are available locally.
  - i. Has your business utilized the free employment service agencies?
  - ii. Are you aware of the free employment services available in your area?
  - iii. Can you provide feedback if you have used the free employment services locally?
4. The EmployerOne Survey reported that 81% of the employers were able to provide training, support and educational opportunities to their employees. Of those surveyed, only 14% of the employers who responded are aware of the training support programs.
  - i. Does your business provide training, support and educational opportunities for employees?
  - ii. Are you aware of the available programs?
  - iii. Are you aware of the Canada Ontario Jobs Grant?
5. What services, resources and support do you feel would be helpful for your business?

## Appendix 2 – Email Questionnaire



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### EmployerOne Focus Group Feedback Survey Questionnaire

1. Did this session provide information about the results of the EmployerOne Survey and the importance of employers providing this data?

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2. Were you encouraged to complete the 2017 EmployerOne Survey?

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3. Did you receive information about how the LEPC is addressing the concerns based on the results from the EmployerOne Survey?

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### Appendix 3 – Employers in attendance at EmployerOne Consultations

The LEPC has completed employer outreach throughout the Thunder Bay district. The EmployerOne consultations had 37 employers who participated, and the following chart identifies these employers using the National American Industry Classification System (NAICS) by sectors:

NAICS	# of Employers in attendance	% of Employer representation	% of Employers Surveyed
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting (11)	2	5	4.1
Mining, Quarrying, Oil and Gas Extraction (21)	4	11	.7
Utilities (22)	1	3	.2
Construction (23)	3	8	11.7
Manufacturing (31-33)	0	0	3
Wholesale Trade (41)	0	0	4.2
Retail Trade (44-45)	5	13	13.9
Transportation and Warehousing (48-49)	1	3	4.7
Information (51)	0	0	.8
Finance and Insurance (52)	4	11	3.4
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing (53)	0	0	3.8
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (54)	1	3	7.5
Management of Companies and Enterprises (55)	0	0	.4
Administration and Support & Waste Management, Remediation Services (56)	0	0	3.6
Educational Services (61)	3	8	1.4
Health Care and Social Assistance (62)	1	3	12.2
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation (71)	0	0	1.6
Accommodation and Food Services (72)	2	5	7.9
Other Services (other than Public Administration) (81)	7	19	10
Public Administration (91)	3	8	1



## Appendix 4 – Employer Resources

Program	Program Description	Available Funding
<b>Graduated Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (GAGE)</b>	GAGE can assist employers with the costs of training an apprentice. You could receive up to \$16,700 to train an apprentice in more than 100 eligible trades. A \$2500 bonus is available if your apprentice is from an underrepresented group such as women, Indigenous peoples, Francophones, people with disabilities, newcomers or racialized people.	Payments are broken down as follows:  Level 1 – \$2,500 (and a \$500 bonus*) Level 2 – \$2,500 (and a \$500 bonus*) Level 3 – \$3,500 (and a \$500 bonus*) Level 4 – \$3,500 (and a \$500 bonus*) Certificate of Apprenticeship / Certificate of Qualification – \$4,700 (and a \$500 bonus*) * if applicable
<b>Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit</b>	The Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit (AJCTC) is a non-refundable tax credit equal to 10% of the eligible salaries and wages payable to eligible apprentices in respect of employment after May 1, 2006. The maximum credit an <u>employer</u> can claim is \$2,000 per year for each eligible apprentice. If your business hires an eligible apprentice, you qualify to claim the credit.	The maximum credit an <u>employer</u> can claim is \$2,000 per year for each eligible apprentice
<b>Cooperative Education Tax Credit</b>	The Co-operative Education Tax Credit is a refundable tax credit. It is available to employers who hire students enrolled in a co-operative education program at an Ontario university or college.	The maximum credit for each work placement is \$3,000. Most work placements are for a minimum employment period of 10 weeks up to a maximum of four months.

Program	Program Description	Available Funding
<b>Employment Ontario – Youth Job Connect</b>	<p>The Employing Young Talent Incentive, for hiring and retaining a young person (15 to 29 years old), if you are a small business with fewer than 100 employees, through Employment Service (new)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• financial incentives for hiring a high school student (15 to 18 years old) through the Youth Job Connection Summer program</li> <li>• additional financial help to offset training costs</li> <li>• an employee who is ready to work following a series of job-preparation workshops</li> <li>• job coaches who provide ongoing support to you and your employee</li> </ul>	\$1,000-\$2,000 through the Employing Young Talent Incentive, for hiring and retaining a young person (15 to 29 years old)
<b>Apprenticeship Completion Employer Bonus</b>	<p>If your trade is not eligible for the <u>Graduated Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (GAGE)</u>, you can apply for this \$1,000 taxable cash grant.</p>	The maximum is a \$1000 taxable cash grant.
<b>FedNor youth internships</b>	<p>If you are interested in hiring a youth intern in Northern Ontario. To qualify you must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operate a small business in Northern Ontario</li> <li>• Hire an unemployed or underemployed youth (aged 30 and under)</li> <li>• Provide a work plan and mentoring/supervision</li> <li>• Have a project related to innovation, the digital economy and trade</li> <li>• Be able to provide full-time work on the project for 12 months</li> </ul>	Funding to assist employers cover up to \$31,500 in salary costs

Program	Program Description	Available Funding
<b>Canada Ontario Jobs Grant (COJG)</b>	<p>The COJG provides direct financial support to individual employers or employer consortia who wish to purchase training for their employees. It is available to small, medium and large businesses with a plan to deliver short-term training to existing and new employees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers can get up to \$10,000 in government support per person for training costs.</li> <li>• The training must be delivered by an eligible, third-party trainer.</li> <li>• Employers with 100 or more employees need to contribute 1/2 of the training costs. Small employers with less than 100 employees need to contribute 1/6 of training costs.</li> <li>• For employer groups who want to apply for training supports the government offers a COJG Consortium Stream. The Consortium Stream allows a group of employers (more than 2 employers) to pool their resources to support common training objectives and goals. To apply as a consortium, the intermediary organization needs to ensure all the participating employers and trainees meet COJG requirements and are able to make their required contribution towards the training cost.</li> <li>• The intermediary organization will be paid 15% of the approved COJG ministry contribution to cover the administrative cost related to the completion of the consortium application.</li> </ul>

## Appendix 5 – Employer Outreach

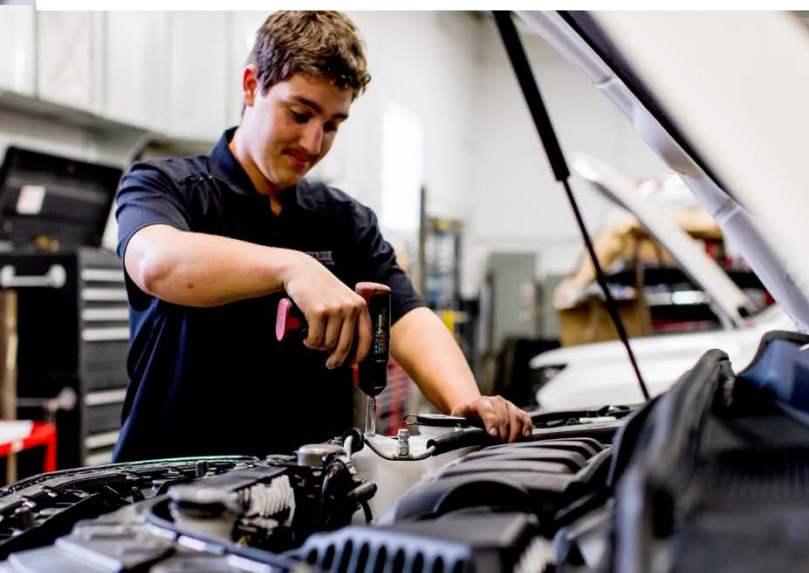
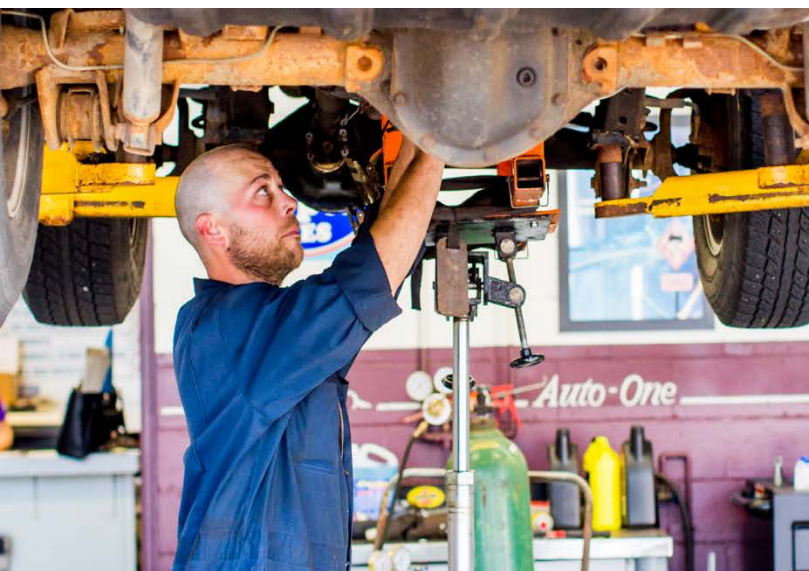
The LEPC for the Thunder Bay District conducted outreach to employers between the years 2015-2018 during the pilot acting as a hub for connecting employers with appropriate employment and training services to address workforce development needs. Here are a few highlights of Employer Outreach activities:

- Panel participant for the Ontario Tourism Education Corporation Conference held in Thunder Bay. The platform allowed the LEPC to discuss workforce challenges and link employers in the hospitality sector to services available locally;
- LEPC staff presented to the Thunder Bay Hotel Association Managers connecting the sector managers to the appropriate employment and training services;
- The LEPC held Industry Engagement sessions in which local service providers made presentations to local employers. These presentations provided an overview of the programs and services available locally;
- Conducted several one-to-one meetings with employers throughout the Thunder Bay District to better understand their business needs. This provided an opportunity to orientate employers to local services and programs to help support their businesses;
- LEPC staff attended the Ontario Prospectors Exploration Showcase engaging with Mining companies working throughout the Thunder Bay District;
- Submitted a proposal in partnership with stakeholders to encourage Noront Resources to consider locating a future Ferrochrome Processing Facility in Thunder Bay;
- Partnered with the Thunder Bay Multicultural Association introducing the Matchmaker Program hiring two Matchmaker staff members to assist local employers with recruitment and attracting newcomers to Northwestern Ontario;
- The LEPC staff nominated Susan Temple for Tradesperson of the Year and the nominee was selected and acknowledged at the Northern Ontario Business Awards Ceremony at the Influential Women's Awards celebration;
- Raise awareness among employers for inclusive workplaces through consultations and developing a resource guide for Indigenous Inclusion Policies; and
- Regularly attended Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce After Business events to network with employers to promote local programs and services.



***Susan Temple, Tradesperson of the Year awarded by the Northern Ontario Business Influential Women's Awards Celebration 2018***





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