BC Non-Profit
Housing Association



Labour Market Challenges and Sector-Driven Solutions for B.C.'s Non-Profit Housing Sector

Canada

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This program is funded by the Government of Canada and the Province of British Columbia.

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Executive Summary

The findings of this report will support practical action and inform future sector-wide workforce strategies to build a more resilient workforce.

Purpose of Report

British Columbia's non-profit housing sector provides safe, affordable and stable housing to thousands of people, many of whom experience complex barriers to accessing and maintaining housing. B.C.'s non-profit housing sector includes more than 800 community-based housing providers that together operate roughly 80,000 affordable homes throughout the province. These organizations are mission driven: they prioritize long-term affordability, tenant stability and community wellbeing and reinvest any surpluses back into homes and services.

However, the sector is currently facing workforce pressures, including persistent staffing shortages, escalating burnout, limited access to sector-specific training and growing complexity in frontline roles.

This study was conducted by BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA) with funding from the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills, Sector Labour Market Program to understand the workforce challenges facing B.C.'s non-profit housing providers and to identify sector-driven solutions that support training and professional development and the recruitment and retention of skilled workers. Drawing on consultations, surveys and literature, the report provides an overview of B.C.'s non-profit housing sector's labour market landscape and highlights solutions to its challenges. The study explores:

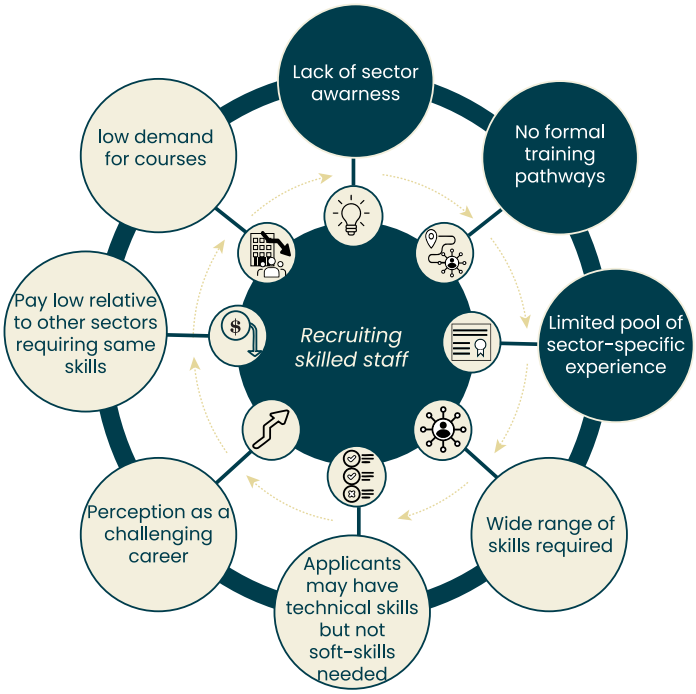
- How people enter the workforce and the barriers they face
- Core training gaps and skills needed across roles
- Challenges for recruiting and retaining skilled workers
- Distinct experiences of Indigenous-led, rural and remote housing societies and staff
- Sector-driven solutions and a strategic plan for implementation

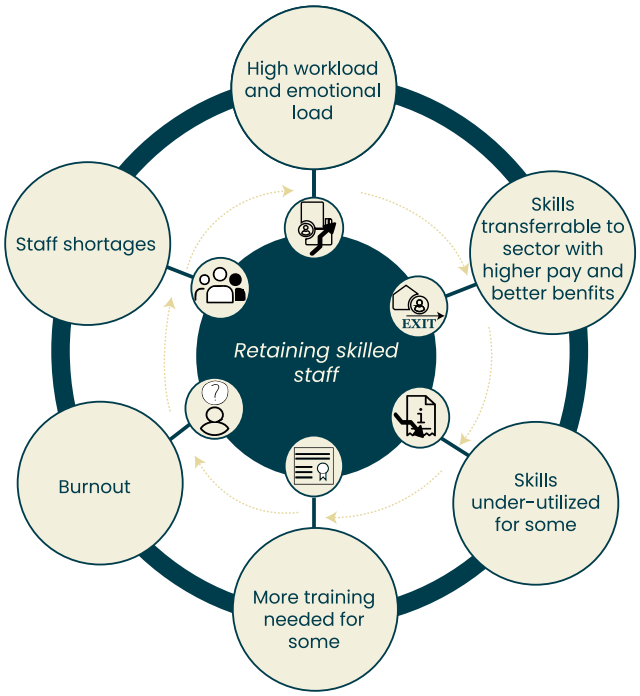
BCNPHA, as a leader in providing professional development on a wide-range of sector related training needs, is well-positioned to lead the implementation of many of the sector-led solutions brought forward during this research.

B.C.'s Non-Profit Housing Sector's Workforce: Current State

Through our survey and consultations that included over 500 research participants and over 75 organizations, we heard B.C.'s non-profit housing workforce is diverse, mission-driven and deeply connected to the communities it serves.

- Workforce Composition and Demographics
  - » Higher representation of women, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities and people with lived-experience than the broader provincial labour force
  - » Includes both long-serving staff and a large share of newer workers, with nearly half having worked in the sector for less than five years, alongside many nearing retirement
- Roles
  - » The sector has many frontline roles including tenant support, maintenance and building operations roles, but also administrative, IT, property management, supervisory and leadership roles
  - » Indigenous staff and people with lived-experience are more likely to be working in frontline roles, where exposure to vicarious trauma is highest
- Skills and Entry Pathways
  - » Workers enter the sector with a range of training and experience, commonly through non-sector specific programs including social sciences, property management, business, health, or non-profit leadership programs
  - » Many workers feel either overqualified for their roles based on formal education, or underprepared for sector-specific competencies such as trauma-informed practice, conflict de-escalation and systems navigation





B.C.'s non-profit housing workforce is facing a number of interconnected challenges impacting access to training and the sector's ability to recruit and retain skilled workers:

1. Limited Sector Awareness and Identity

The sector lacks a shared identity that clearly communicates what non-profit housing work involves or how careers progress. This limits awareness of housing as a career option, weakens recruitment and reduces alignment between training programs and sector needs, reinforcing reliance on informal entry into the workforce.

2. Informal and Unplanned Entry into the Sector

Workers often enter through referrals, volunteering, lived-experience, or adjacent fields rather than intentional career planning. This results in uneven preparation and fragmented skill development, increasing reliance on on-the-job learning and placing additional pressure on existing staff.

3. Barriers to Accessing Relevant Training

For aspiring workers, access to sector-specific training is limited by the absence of a clear non-profit housing identity that positions the sector as a career destination and lack of agreement on what preparation is required to work in the sector. Without clear signals about relevant training or career value, prospective workers do not plan their education around housing roles, resulting in low and inconsistent demand for sector-specific training.

Low demand makes it difficult for training programs to justify investment in sector-specific curriculum, further limiting the availability of intentional entry training and reinforcing reliance on informal pathways into the workforce.

4. Persistent Recruitment Challenges

With no formal training pathways, it is difficult for housing providers to know where to recruit and advertise job openings. Employers report difficulty finding candidates with a mix of technical, relational and sector-specific skills. Frontline support, maintenance and property management roles are particularly difficult to fill. While many workers are drawn to the sector's mission, concerns about workload intensity often outweigh what draws people to work in the sector.

5. Limited Professional Development and Career Growth

Workers face barriers to professional development, while employers struggle to offer training due to cost and backfill constraints. When training is not clearly linked to advancement or compensation, motivation for employees and employers to invest in professional development remains low, reinforcing retention challenges.

6. Burnout and Retention Pressures

High workloads, emotional labour, vicarious trauma and compensation drive burnout and turnover. As experienced staff leave, organizations lose operational knowledge and the capacity to mentor, supervise and onboard newer workers, intensifying recruitment and training challenges.

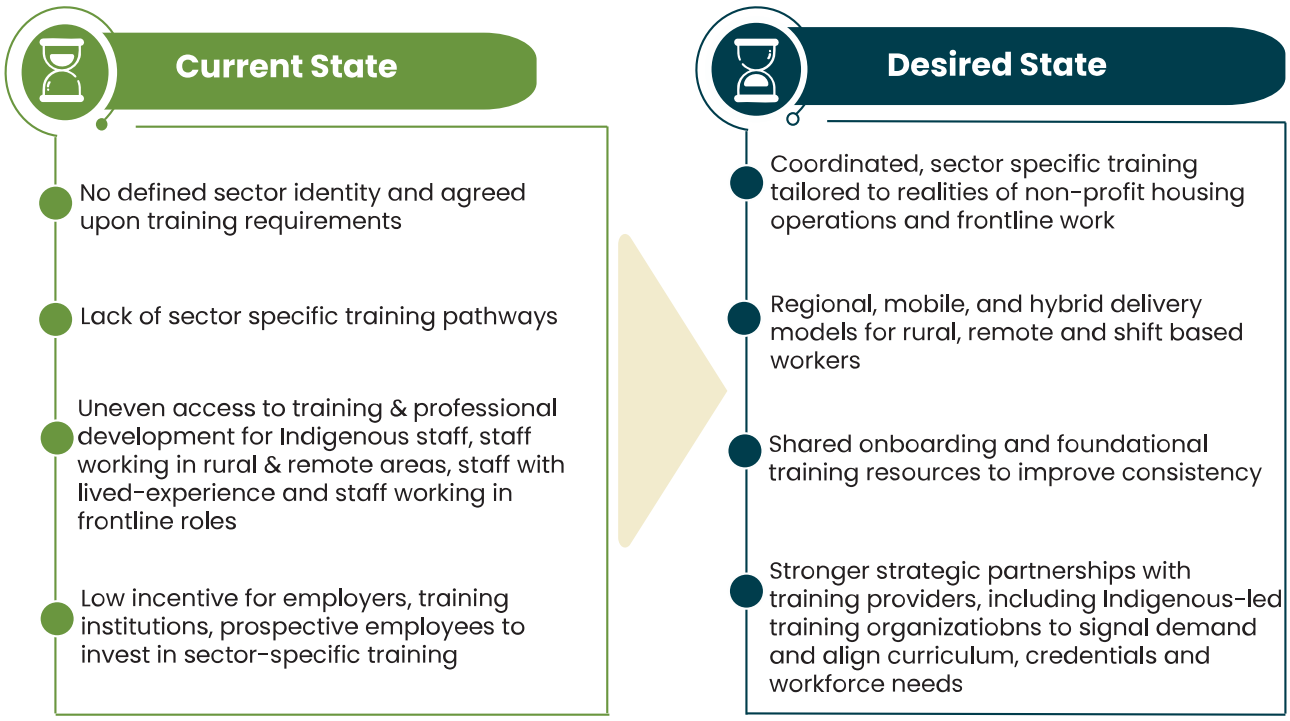
7. Distinct Challenges

Indigenous staff, staff with lived-experience and newcomers face additional barriers related to credential recognition and access to culturally safe and trauma-informed training and workplace supports. These groups are overrepresented in frontline roles with the highest burnout risk and least access to professional development, reinforcing inequities in training access, advancement and retention. In rural and remote communities, the sector's workforce challenges are compounded by small labour pools, limited local training availability and travel and connectivity barriers to accessing training, again impacting recruitment and retention.

B.C.'s Non-Profit Housing Sector's Workforce: Where We Need to Be

The workforce challenges identified in this study are not isolated issues, but the result of **reinforcing systems** that constrain entry into the sector, limit access to training and professional development and discourage long-term investment by employers and training institutions. Without intervention, these feedback loops perpetuate fragmented training pathways, staffing shortages, burnout and inequitable access to advancement.

The desired state vision outlined below represents a **deliberate shift away from these self-reinforcing dynamics**. By coordinating training pathways, strengthening sector-wide signaling and aligning training with career progression, sector-led strategies can interrupt the mechanisms that currently limit workforce development.



The findings of this research identified key training needs, both for sector-specific pre-training and professional development, as well as important considerations for delivering training.

Top Training Needs for B.C.'s Non-Profit Housing Sector's Workforce and Potential Workers:

- Foundations of Non-Profit Housing Systems in B.C.
- Trauma-Informed, Culturally Safe and Anti-Oppressive Practice
- Frontline Safety, Crisis Response and De-escalation
- Tenant Relations and Systems Navigation
- Supervision and People Leadership in Housing Settings
- Mental Health, Burnout Prevention and Worker Well-Being
- Property and Building Operations in Non-Profit Housing
- Building Science, Asset Preservation and Decarbonization
- Modern Methods of Construction
- Climate Resilience and Emergency Preparedness
- Financial Literacy and Alternative Capital
- Inclusive HR Practices
- Applied Digital Skills and AI Literacy

Training Design and Delivery That Work Best for B.C.'s Non-Profit Housing Sector:

- Sector-specific training grounded in the realities of non-profit housing work
- Training accessible to frontline and shift-based staff
- Modular and stackable formats that build toward credentials
- Approaches that integrate paid work and training
- Culturally safe and Indigenous-led delivery
- Regional, in-community, or mobile training delivery models
- Low-bandwidth online training options
- Centralized, easy-to-navigate access to training opportunities

B.C.'s Non-Profit Housing Sector's Workforce Desired State: How We Get There

The findings and sector-led strategies outlined in this report are intended to shift these conditions toward a more coordinated, accessible and sustainable workforce system.

The strategic plan is organized around a set of interconnected pillars that reflect the core workforce challenges identified across the non-profit housing sector and provide a framework for coordinated, sector-led action. The strategic plan focuses on what BCNPHA can do to support the sector in achieving its ideal training systems to, in turn, support the sector's ability to recruit and retain skilled workers.



Pillar 1 — Strengthen Sector Identity and Awareness

This pillar aims to build a shared sector identity that improves public awareness of non-profit housing as a viable career. Strengthening identity supports recruitment, alignment with training providers and clearer understanding of roles, competencies and long-term career options.



Pillar 2 — Create Clear Pathways into Sector Careers

This pillar focuses on establishing intentional, visible pathways for people to enter non-profit housing careers. It emphasizes strengthening connections between training, experiential learning and employment.



Pillar 3 — Expand Access to Training and Professional Development

This pillar prioritizes equitable access to training and professional development that is relevant, culturally safe and responsive to the realities of frontline, technical and leadership roles. It addresses barriers related to cost, scheduling, geography and accessibility, particularly for workers who have historically faced barriers to accessing training.



Pillar 4 — Improve Recruitment and Retention Conditions

This pillar focuses on strengthening recruitment and retention by improving workplace supports, improving leadership capacity and streamlining HR practices. It includes focus on addressing burnout, workload and limited career progression.



Pillar 5 — Support Equity and Regional Realities

This pillar acknowledges that workforce challenges are not experienced evenly across the sector and require tailored approaches. It centers on reducing barriers to access, particularly for frontline workers, Indigenous-led housing societies and staff, rural and remote housing providers, newcomers and people with lived-experience, by ensuring training and professional development opportunities are accessible, flexible and relevant to varied work contexts.

Acknowledgements

Alita Tocher
M'akola Housing Society

Amelia Merrick

Amy FitzGerald
B.C. Society of Transition Houses

Celeste Hayward
Aboriginal Housing Management Association

Jena Weber
Aboriginal Housing Management Association

Mark Miller
Connective

Matt Rossington
Langara College

Zahra Esmail
Vantage Point

Matthew Boddy
Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills

Carolyn Wilcher
Ministry of Housing

The BCNPHA project team gratefully acknowledges that we carry out our work on the unceded, traditional and ancestral territories of hundreds of Indigenous Peoples and Nations throughout British Columbia, each with their own unique traditions, histories and cultures. We are committed to advancing reconciliation through our work and strive to contribute meaningfully to the wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples across the province.

We offer our deepest gratitude to the individuals working in the non-profit housing sector who generously contributed their time, expertise and lived-experience to this project. They shared professional knowledge and insights gained on the frontline of the housing crisis and their voices have been essential in shaping this report. We are also grateful to the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation for conducting the employee survey on our behalf.

We also thank our governance committee, comprised of leaders in the non-profit housing sector, provincial funders, training providers and beyond, whose guidance and vision helped us confidently approach this project and better understand the employment and training landscape of the non-profit housing sector.

Finally, we are grateful to the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills and the Sector Labour Market Partnerships (SLMP program, for its generous support in funding this study and for recognizing the value of examining workforce challenges in the non-profit housing sector. We also thank the Ministry for its constructive direction and guidance throughout the development of the research strategy, tools and findings, which contributed meaningfully to the rigor and relevance of this work.

About BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA)

BCNPHA represents the non-profit housing sector in British Columbia. With a network of members across the province, we advance innovative housing solutions, inform policy and foster collaboration to address the urgent need for affordable housing.

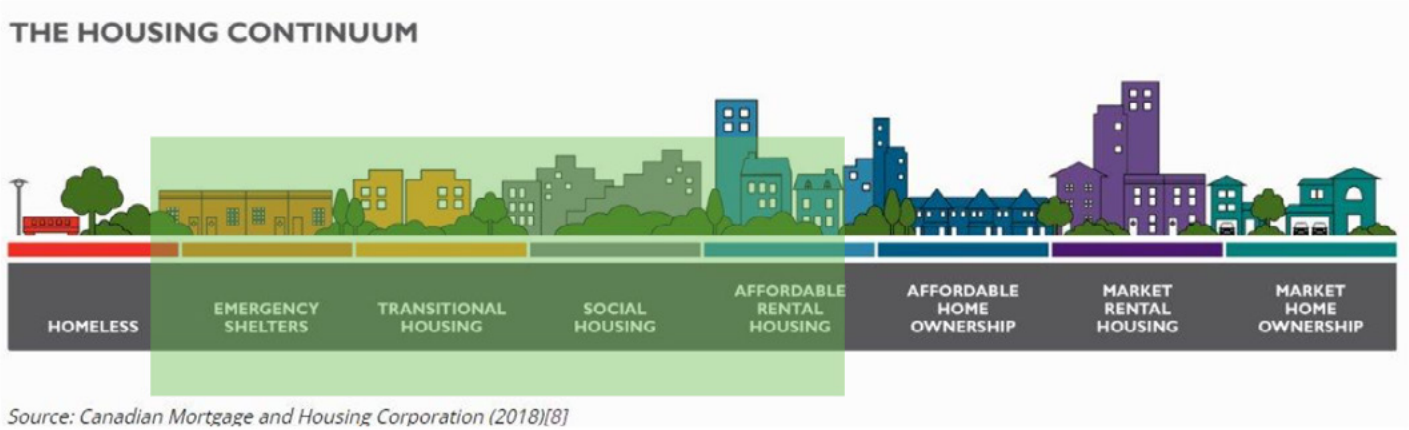
Introduction

Context

The non-profit housing sector in British Columbia plays a critical role in providing safe and affordable housing. As the sector has expanded in response to growing housing need, workforce pressures have intensified. Housing providers report difficulty attracting qualified candidates, particularly frontline support, maintenance and specialized roles. Once hired, staff often face high workloads, exposure to trauma, limited opportunities for advancement and fewer benefits than are available in other sectors competing for similar skills.

At the same time, the sector lacks clear and visible pathways into housing careers. Many people enter the field by chance rather than through planned education or training routes. Training opportunities are often fragmented, costly, or poorly aligned with the day-to-day realities of housing work. These issues are compounded for Indigenous peoples working or wanting to work in the sector and Indigenous-led organizations, rural and remote providers and people with lived-experience, who face additional barriers related to geography, cultural safety and access to formal credentials.

Together, these factors create a cycle of vacancies, turnover and burnout that threatens the long-term sustainability of the non-profit housing workforce.



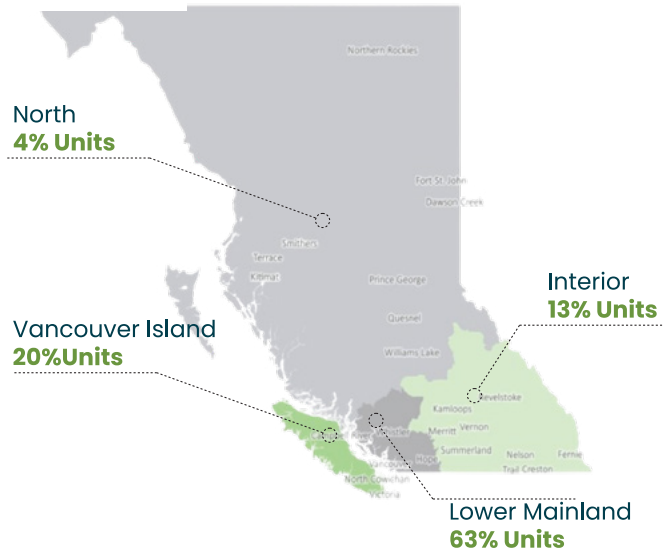
Source: Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (2018)[8]

Overview of B.C.'s Non-Profit Housing Sector

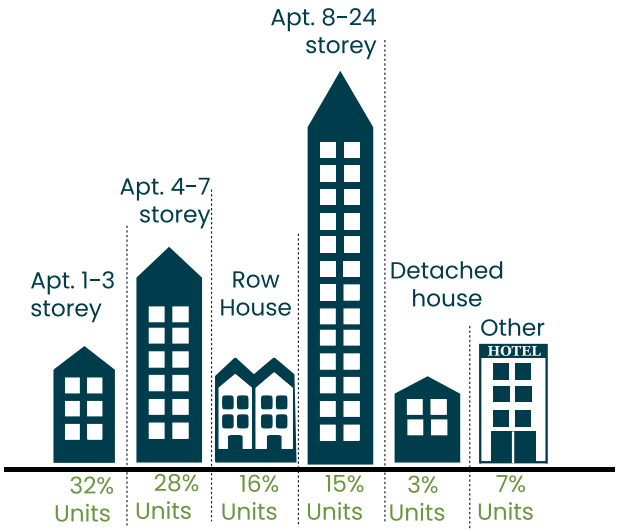
B.C.'s non-profit housing sector includes more than 800 community-based housing providers that together operate roughly 80,000 affordable homes throughout the province. These organizations are mission driven: they prioritize long-term affordability, tenant stability and community wellbeing and reinvest any surpluses back into homes and services. They serve seniors, families, Indigenous peoples, people with disabilities and others who cannot afford to access appropriate housing in the private market.

Breakdown of units in B.C.'s Non-Profit Housing Sector

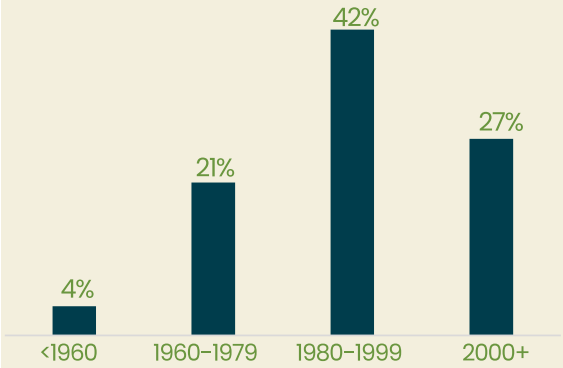
By Region



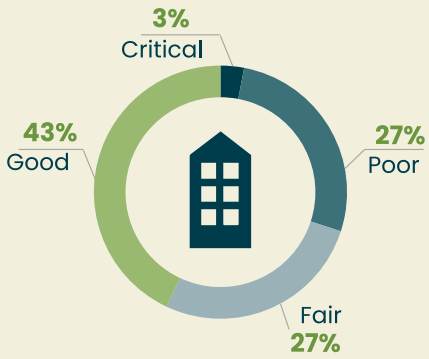
By building type



By building age



By building FCI score



Note: Percentages may add up to more than 100% due to rounding.
Source: BC Non-Profit Housing Association, based on B.C. Housing's Asset Planner (Ameresco), 2025

B.C.'s non-profit housing workforce is geographically diverse, with over half of non-profit homes located outside the Lower Mainland, including many in small and remote communities.

Purpose of the Study

This study was funded by the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills, Sector Labour Market Program. The study was conducted by BC Non-Profit Housing Association (BCNPHA).

The purpose of this research is to better understand labour market challenges in B.C.'s non-profit housing sector and identify practical sector-driving solutions. The study aims to:

- Describe how people currently enter the non-profit housing workforce and challenges in accessing relevant training.
- Identify skills gaps and training needs for both current and aspiring workers in the sector.
- Identify challenges with recruitment and retention of skilled workers across different roles, regions and types of housing providers.
- Determine sector-driven solutions that are practical, impactful and scalable to create clear training pathways to working in the sector and accessing professional development to address the sector's recruitment and retention challenges.

Despite long-recognized workforce pressures in the non-profit housing sector, many of these challenges have historically been described anecdotally or in isolation by individual housing societies. This study provides value by documenting and validating those experiences across regions, provider types and roles, using surveys, consultations, literature and secondary data to establish a shared evidence base. By bringing together frontline workers' experiences, employer perspectives and training system insights, the research transforms informal knowledge into a coherent sector-wide understanding of workforce challenges and priorities.

The scope of this study was centred on understanding workforce challenges and identifying sector-led solutions, rather than assessing the total size of the workforce or costing specific recommendations.

Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the **operational workforce** of B.C.'s non-profit housing sector, including frontline support, property and building operations, administration, management and leadership roles that are required to operate and sustain existing housing and services. This operational workforce has not previously been studied in a comprehensive or B.C.-specific way.

While some national research has examined frontline workers in emergency shelter and homelessness support settings, there is little existing analysis of the non-profit housing sector's workforce across the full range of housing models it delivers, including independent affordable housing, supportive housing and emergency housing. In British Columbia, non-profit housing providers operate under distinct provincial funding, delivery methods and geographic considerations compared to other provinces. This study was necessary to build a B.C.-specific evidence base to document the realities of non-profit housing operations across regions and housing types and to inform workforce strategies that are relevant, practical and grounded in the day-to-day conditions of the sector.

While the non-profit housing sector also plays an important role in housing development and construction, those functions involve clearer training pathways, which are already well studied. As a result, workforce challenges related to development and construction were intentionally excluded to ensure the study remained focused on the day-to-day operational realities that affect workforce stability and tenant outcomes across the province.

At present, there is no single, reliable data source that captures the full non-profit housing workforce in B.C., due to overlapping roles across housing and support services and limitations within existing labour market classification systems. This study prioritized mixed-method evidence to build an accurate and credible picture of workforce conditions rather than speculative estimates of workforce size

While government policies, programs and funding contribute to many of the challenges described, this report intentionally focuses on solutions that can be advanced by the sector itself through.

The recommendations are organized into a strategic plan outlining how sector-led workforce strategies can be implemented.

How Findings Will Be Used

The findings of this study are intended to support **practical, forward-looking action**. They will inform the development of new and expanded sector-specific training courses, greater regional and mobile training delivery and stronger strategic partnerships with post-secondary institutions, Indigenous-led training providers and professional development organizations.

The evidence produced through this work will strengthen the sector's ability to clearly communicate its workforce needs to training institutions and funders, align curriculum with real-world housing operations and support coordinated approaches to recruitment and retention.

This strategic plan outlines the study's recommendations and is intended to guide the next phase of work. Following the release of this report, BCNPHA will use the strategic plan to develop a separate implementation plan that identifies the actions BCNPHA could take to advance the key findings. As BCNPHA's future capacity will depend on available funding, the implementation plan will also clarify which actions BCNPHA may be able to lead directly and which will require partnerships, additional resources, or sector-led leadership.

>500

people contributed to consultations and surveys, with in-person and virtual consultations reaching over 75 organizations.

Methods

This study involved three phases:

- Evidence review and secondary analysis
- Province-wide engagement and surveys
- Synthesis, validation and strategic planning

The study used a mixed-methods approach. Data was collected through regional in-person and topic-based virtual focus groups, key informant interviews, an employee survey, literature review and environmental scan and secondary data analysis. Using multiple data sources allowed findings to be tested and reinforced across methods, strengthening the reliability of the results by showing clear themes and trends, but also allowing different voices and perspectives to be heard. Participants were self-selected and recruitment was done through BCNPHA and partner organization newsletters and social media. A multi-method approach was used to limit barriers to participation and ensure adequate sector representation. Please see Appendix 2 for details of the data collection activities.

This level of consultation was necessary because the non-profit housing sector does not operate as a single, uniform workforce and its workforce challenges cannot be accurately understood through centralized data or a limited set of perspectives.

Triangulating insights from consultations, surveys, literature and secondary data was critical to validating common themes, understanding where experiences diverge and ensuring that the findings and sector-driven solutions reflect the operational realities of the sector as a whole rather than the perspectives of a narrow subset of organizations.

The study was guided by a governance committee made up of non-profit housing societies, as well as representatives from the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills and the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs. The committee provided strategic guidance on the research process and tools, participated in relevant focus groups, helped arrange focus group opportunities and offered feedback. An economist from the Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills conducted a technical review of the research design, data collection tools, literature review and key findings to ensure methodological rigor.

Limitations

Capacity constraints within the sector, such as staffing shortages, shift-based and after-hours work, workload intensity and travel distances, meant some individuals and organizations may have been unable to engage despite interest. Please see Appendix 2 for mitigation strategies.

As participation was self-selected, the findings are not statistically representative of the sector's full workforce. As a result, the study cannot be used to estimate scale or prevalence and may not reflect the experiences of those who were unable to participate. Instead, findings are intended to illustrate sector-wide patterns and operational realities, not provide precise counts or proportions.

B.C.'s Non-Profit Housing Workforce

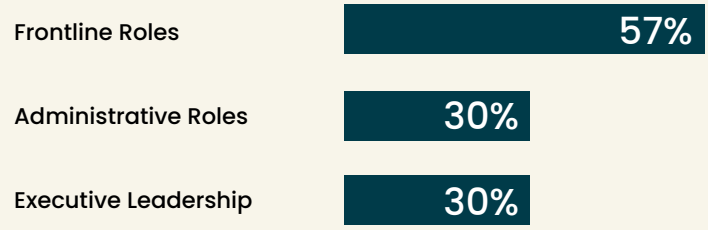
There is no data source that provides an estimate of the number of people working in B.C.'s non-profit housing sector. We know there are approximately 800 community-based housing providers in B.C., but those organizations range from board operated with no staff, to very small and medium-sized organizations, to organizations that provide a wide range of housing types and support services and employ hundreds of staff.

Both small and larger housing societies may employ people in both frontline and administrative or management-type roles (or in some cases, individual staff members take on more than one type of role), with roles including:

- Property management
- Tenant supports (including intake coordinators, counselors, chefs, caretakers, health providers)
- Maintenance, asset and portfolio planning
- Accounting and finance
- Development roles
- Fundraising
- Administrative roles (e.g. reception and data clerks)
- IT
- HR
- Management
- Leadership

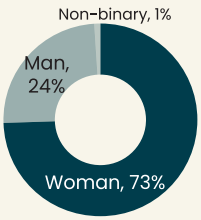
Survey Respondents by Role Types

Note: Percentages may sum to more than 100% due to multiple response options.

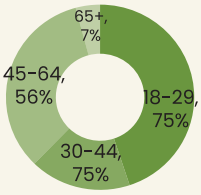


Demographic Profile for Survey Respondents

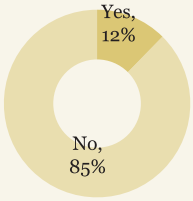
Gender (n=301)



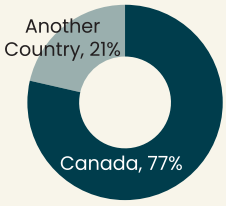
Age (n=302)



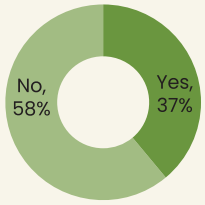
Indigenous Identity (n=300)



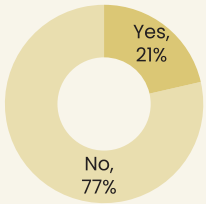
Immigrant Status (n=302)



Lived Experience (n=302)



Disability (n=302)



Workforce Demographics

The demographic profile of B.C.'s non-profit housing workforce differs in important ways from the general labour force. These demographics show a workforce that is diverse and reflective of the communities it serves. Understanding who is working in the sector and the experiences they bring is essential for designing training pathways, recruitment strategies and retention approaches that are both effective and equitable.

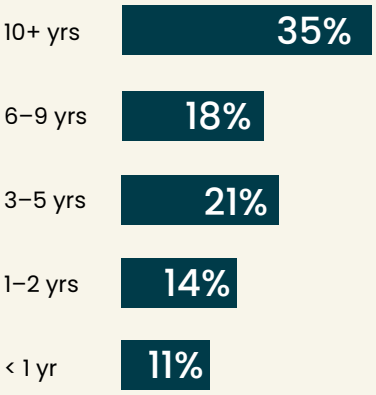
The workforce includes a higher representation of women and Indigenous peoples than is typically seen across the broader provincial workforce (characteristics of B.C. workers are available in Appendix 4 for comparison). The sector includes a significant number of workers nearing retirement age, alongside many younger employees who are new to the workforce. Over one fifth of the sector's workforce reported having a disability, similar to B.C.'s overall workforce.

While survey findings show a presence of newcomers to Canada in the sector, evidence from the consultations suggest that newcomer representation may be higher than what the survey captured. This likely reflects survey participation dynamics rather than actual workforce composition.

A key demographic feature of the non-profit housing workforce is the prevalence of staff with lived-experience. More than one-third of people working in the sector report having lived-experience related to non-profit housing or homelessness.

While there are common demographic characteristics between B.C.'s non-profit housing sector's workforce and the province's overall non-profit workforce when comparing to the 2025 State of B.C. Non-Profit Sector Report, there are also some notable differences. While both workforces are predominantly women (69% for non-profit sector), there is a higher share of Indigenous staff in non-profit housing (12 % in non-profit housing compared to 5% for the non-profit sector). The non-profit housing sector survey showed a lower proportion of newcomers to Canada (34% for the non-profit sector).

Survey Respondents by Time Working in Sector



Time in Sector

The employee survey shows the sector's workforce is made up of both newer and long-serving staff. While over one third of respondents have been working in the sector for at least 10 years, almost half of respondents have been working in the sector for less than 5 years. For some, non-profit housing represents an entry point into the labour market altogether with one in five respondents indicated their current role is their first-ever job.

Roles in Sector

The non-profit housing workforce in B.C. is built around a large frontline contingent supported by leadership, administration and technical operations roles. In the survey sample, most respondents work in frontline functions (57%), alongside leadership roles (30%) and administrative roles (30%).

Frontline work encompasses a mix of tenant support and specialized service positions. While the sector offers a range of housing types, many of the frontline roles are concentrated in emergency shelters, transition housing, outreach programs and supportive housing, but also maintenance staff in independent housing.

Importantly, representation is not evenly distributed across roles. **Respondents who identified as Indigenous, reported a disability, or reported lived-experience were more likely to be in frontline roles.**

Those in leadership roles often balance strategic and operational demands and respondents working in leadership reported higher overtime and workload pressures compared to other roles.

In addition to roles that support tenants, there are many roles in the sector that support the buildings providing safe and affordable housing. These roles include property/building managers (20%) and maintenance/facilities staff (8%). While these roles require an understanding of tenant needs, they also require strong knowledge of asset management.

Survey Respondents by Role Type

Group	Frontline share (%)	All respondents (%)
People with lived-experience	70%	50%
Indigenous staff	83%	55%
People with disabilities	68%	55%

Culturally Safe Practice

Culturally safe practice refers to approaches that create environments where Indigenous Peoples feel respected, heard and safe from discrimination, racism and colonial power imbalances. Rooted in Indigenous concepts of holistic wellbeing, cultural safety requires providers to actively reflect on their own biases, acknowledge the impacts of colonization and adapt services to align with the cultural identities, traditions and experiences of the individuals and communities they serve. While grounded in Indigenous practice, cultural safety also supports people from all cultural backgrounds by prioritizing dignity, autonomy and relational understanding.

Trauma-Informed Practice

Trauma-informed practice is an approach that recognizes the widespread effects of trauma and incorporates this understanding into policies, interactions and service delivery. It emphasizes safety, trust, choice, collaboration and empowerment, aiming to avoid retraumatization and support emotional regulation and connection. Rather than requiring people to disclose trauma, trauma-informed practice assumes that trauma may be present and designs services, environments and relationships that are sensitive to its impacts.

For more information, please see:

First Nations Health Authority: Cultural Safety and Humility

AHMA: https://ahma-B.C..org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/2023-04-25PositionPaperSupportiveHousing-FINAL12.pdf [ahma-B.C..org]

Centre of Excellence for Women's Health: https://cewh.ca/recent-work/trauma-informed-practice/

What does this tell us:

- The survey shows that Indigenous staff and people with lived-experience are represented in the sector's workforce at higher proportions than in B.C.'s broader labour force
- Survey findings show that many people enter the sector with valuable skills from lived-experience
  - » Findings from consultations and the literature review indicate that people with lived-experience can face barriers in accessing formal training, suggesting candidates with relevant experience and skills may be overlooked in recruitment processes that rely on require formal credentials
- The sector's diverse workforce requires trauma-informed, culturally safe workplaces and training pathways
- Many workers come to the sector with strengths in areas such as asset management, finance, or IT, but lack sector-specific competencies, including tenant engagement, conflict de-escalation and navigating complex support systems
- To support newer workers and reduce early turnover, the sector needs strong onboarding, role-specific early training and supportive supervision practices

Turnover Risk and Workforce Stability – What the Data Shows

Important methodological note

This study does not estimate a sector-wide turnover rate. The survey captures workers' intentions and perceptions, rather than observed separation events over time and there is no reliable dataset that defines the size of the operational workforce against which turnover could be calculated. As a result, the findings should be interpreted as indicators of turnover risk and workforce instability, rather than measures of realized turnover.

Survey respondents by planned time in sector

Time Horizon	Current job	Current org.	Sector
Within 1 year	~12%	~7%	~4%
Within 3 years	~35%	~21%	~14%
Within 5 years	~55%	~49%	~43%

Interpretation

- Near-term exit intentions (≤1 year) are relatively low, indicating **limited immediate turnover**
- By three years, exit intentions increase, particularly at the **job and organizational level**
- By five years, nearly half of respondents expect to leave their organization or the sector entirely, signaling **strong turnover pressure** if underlying conditions are not addressed

Role-based patterns intensifying turnover pressure

Turnover risk is **not evenly distributed** across the workforce:

- **Frontline workers** report higher burnout, greater dissatisfaction with compensation and work-life balance and stronger intentions to change jobs
- **Leadership respondents** are more likely to cite **retirement** as a planned exit, creating succession pressure rather than short-term turnover
- **Newer workers** are more likely to express uncertainty about staying long-term, driven by stress, limited advancement pathways and under-utilization of skills
- Indigenous staff, people with lived-experience, and frontline workers are disproportionately concentrated in roles associated with **higher cumulative turnover risk**

How this compares with B.C.'s non-profit sector generally

Vantage Point's State of the Non-Profit Sector reports identify **staff burnout, workload intensity, compensation pressures and retention challenges** as sector-wide issues, with many organizations reporting difficulty retaining staff and increased time and cost spent on recruitment. While Vantage Point does not publish a single standardized provincial turnover rate, their findings point to **ongoing workforce instability across the non-profit sector**, particularly in community-facing service roles.

What this means for workforce planning

The findings suggest that B.C.'s non-profit housing sector is not facing an imminent departure of staff, but rather a **steady accumulation of turnover over the medium term**. Without coordinated investment in training access, career pathways, workload supports and succession planning, the sector risks ongoing loss of institutional knowledge, rising recruitment costs and reduced operational stability—particularly in frontline roles essential to housing continuity and tenant outcomes.

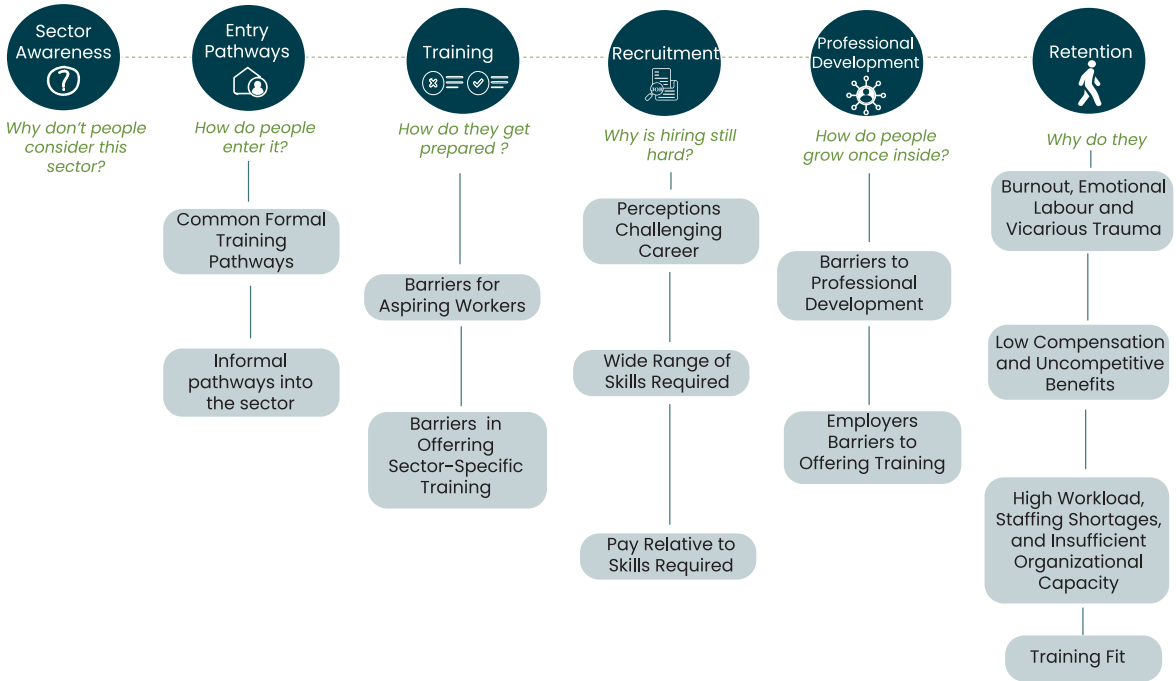
Challenges Facing the Non-Profit Housing Sector

This section outlines the primary workforce challenges identified through consultations and supported by the literature review. The challenges are not isolated issues, but part of a broader system in which limited training pathways, recruitment barriers and retention pressures reinforce one another. These challenges affect the entire sector, with particularly acute impacts for Indigenous-led organizations and staff, rural and remote providers, frontline workers and people with lived-experience.

Understanding these challenges is important for identifying effective, sector-driven solutions, which are described in the following section.

Context: Workforce Development

Workforce development in Canada is often described using a framework that spans career awareness, entry pathways, training, recruitment, professional growth and retention[1]. These stages are not necessarily linear and are shaped by reinforcing system dynamics. Challenges in this report are organized using the lens of a workforce development continuum for clarity, while intentionally maintaining distinct challenge areas to reflect the interconnected and compounding barriers identified across all methods of data collection.

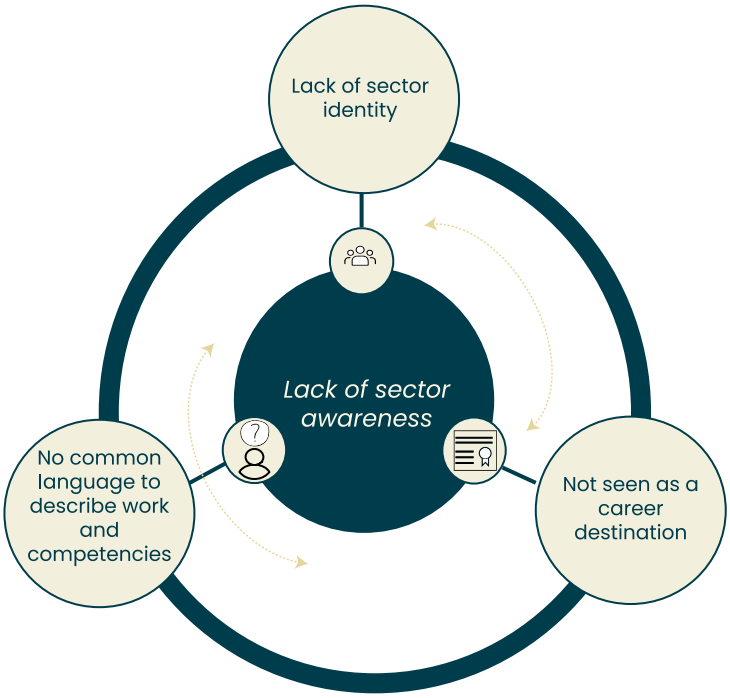


Workforce Equity: How do workforce challenges intersect to create distinct barriers for some workers and housing societies

1. B.C.-Clean-Economy-Workforce-Industry-Strategy.pdf; Strengthening and supporting B.C.'s K-12 workforce - Province of British Columbia; The Employability Skills Assessment Tool (ESAT)

Challenge 1: Sector Awareness and Identity

A common theme throughout the consultations was that there is a lack of sector identity and awareness of the work options in the sector. Few people see the sector as a defined career destination. Without a common language for describing the work and its competencies, the sector lacks a strong professional narrative that people can see themselves as a part of. As a result, individuals do not plan their training or early career decisions with non-profit housing in mind.



Findings indicate following training needs:

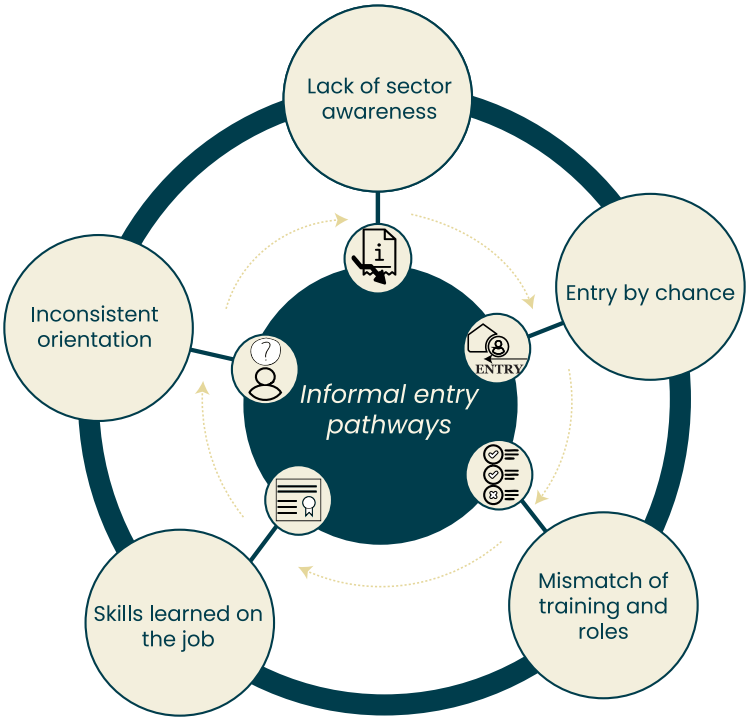
- Career coaching
- Introduction to the Non-Profit Housing Sector

What this tells us:

- The sector lacks a clear, unified career narrative, making it difficult for prospective workers to understand long-term career possibilities or see non-profit housing as a viable profession
- Without coordinated outreach or consistent public messaging about sector roles, many potential workers remain unaware that meaningful, mission-driven careers exist in non-profit housing
- Providing sector-specific training about housing systems in B.C. for people new to the field can help ground their work in a common understanding and supports the development of a sector-aligned professional identity

Challenge 2: Pathways into the Sector

B.C.'s non-profit housing sector does not have clear training pathways. While there are some common formal training programs people working in the sector have accessed with limited sector-specific training opportunities, people often "fall into" working in the sector rather than considering it as a career option when planning training or looking for work.



37%
of respondents reported having training certificates

Common Formal Training Pathways

The survey showed at least one third of respondents have an undergraduate degree and/or college degree, including 17% who have a graduate degree. This was mostly the case for respondents with management roles. Additionally, 37% of respondents reported having training certificates. Participants without a bachelor's degree were more likely to report obtaining training certificates compared to those with a degree (44% compared to 29%).

Typical Pathways

How people enter the field now

Training Once Hired

- Role and sector-specific training are inconsistent across housing societies
- Training happens after hiring/on the job

Unplanned or Informal Entry

- Happestance
- Through personal /professional networks
- Friends/family using housing supports
- Volunteer/board/community advocacy
- Lived experience
- Transitioned from other support work

Formal Training (Not Sector -Specific)

- University, college degrees
- Business, IT, Planning, Engineering, Nursing, Social Work, Non-Profit Leadership, Counselling, HR, etc.
- Training certificates
- Trauma and crisis intervention, counselling, conflict resolution, etc.
- Internships

Ideal Pathways

Sector-Specific Training Pathways

- Sector-specific post-secondary accredited courses
- Sector/training provider partnerships for course design
- Employer-incentivized pre-training where feasible
- Trauma informed, culturally safe, Indigenous-led training oppurtunities
- Training and apprenticeships in rural and remote communities

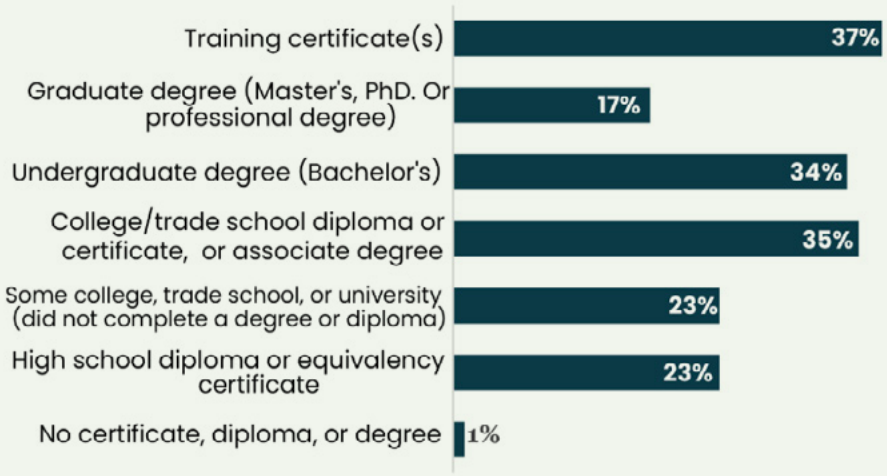
Recognition of Experience

- Inclusive hiring practices to recognize valuable experience
- Recognize transgerrable skills in hiring
- Look for values alignment
- PLAR to reduce barriers to formal training

Early Exposure to Influence Training Pathways

- Job fairs at post-secondary
- Clear sector identity and communications about careers in sector

Survey Respondents by Educational Attainment



Note: Multiple responses allowed.

Educational attainment for workers in the sector varied by several other factors. The survey showed:

- Younger respondents (aged 18 to 34) had the highest rate of bachelor's or higher degrees (72% compared to 40%)
- Newcomers also reported higher rates of bachelor's or higher degrees compared to Canadian-born respondents (68% compared to 32%)
- Respondents in the Lower Mainland (57%) and Vancouver Island (51%) had higher rates of bachelor's or higher degrees compared to the Interior (32%) and Northern B.C. (17%)
- Non-Indigenous respondents reported higher rates of receiving undergraduate degrees (or higher) than Indigenous Peoples (47% compared to 31%)
- People without lived-experience were more likely to report higher completion rates (51% compared to 40%)

The most commonly reported post-secondary degrees based on the survey were in the social sciences (e.g., social work, psychology and sociology). Common certificates included accounting and business management diplomas. The survey and consultations revealed workers in the sector also accessed training in:

- Property management
- HR
- Accounting
- Justice Institute training and certificate programs
- Engineering
- Nursing
- Counselling
- Non-profit leadership

Job postings on Housing Jobs Match over the last two years showed the following educational requirements by role:

- Clinical/Health: split between bachelor's degree and not specified, with many JDs requiring, First Aid/CPR, etc.
- Property/Facilities: High School or equivalent
- Frontline/Shelter: Associate/Some College and Bachelor's
- Finance/Accounting: Bachelor's/Certification/License

Findings indicate following training needs:

- Foundations of Non-Profit Housing 101
- Introduction to Supportive Housing & Tenant Relations
- Cultural Safety & Anti-Oppression Essentials
- Core Skills for Frontline Roles (de-escalation, crisis response, safety protocols)
- Asset & Building Operations Basics for Non-Technical Staff

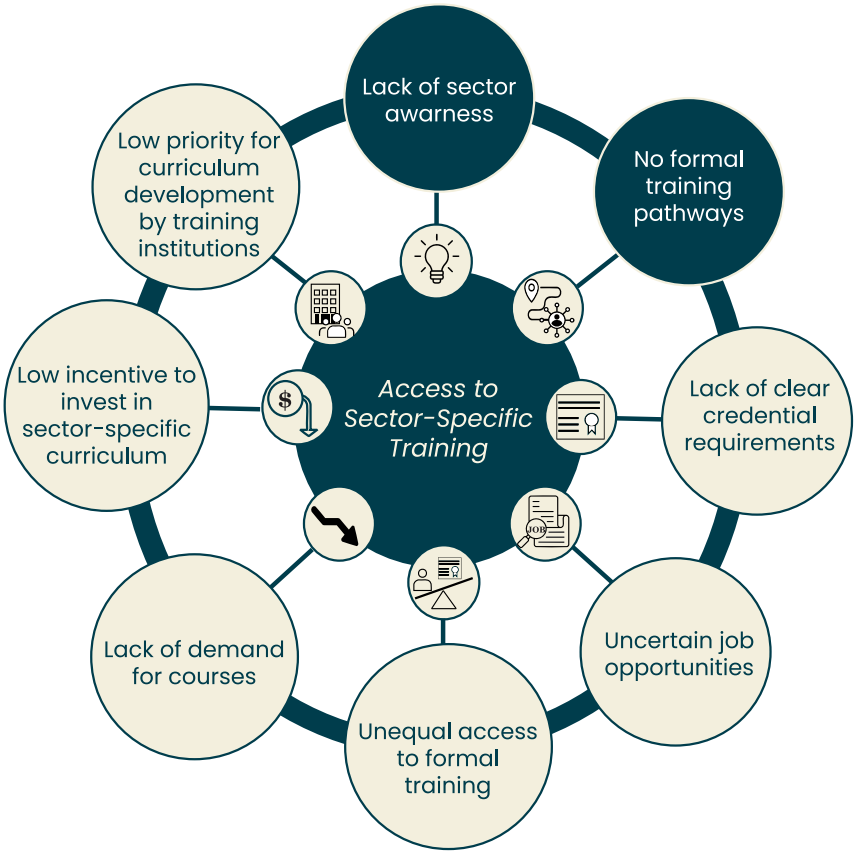
What this tells us:

- Most workers with formal training bring skills that are applied from other fields to their work in the sector, but lack training to develop sector-specific skills
- The training accessed by those working in the sector equips workers with skills that are highly valued in other sectors, including sectors that offer better pay, benefits, hours of work and less vicarious trauma and other sector-related stress
- Staff who are Indigenous or have lived-experience may experience barriers accessing formal pre-career training programs and professional development

Challenge 3: Access to Sector-Specific Training

Barriers for Aspiring Workers

With no consistent, sector-wide training pathways or credential expectations, people interested in the sector often struggle to understand which education or training investments will meaningfully support entry into the field or advancement within it. In contrast to sectors with clearly defined credentials or licensing requirements, **the non-profit housing sector's labour market offers few clear signals about what training is expected and valued**. This lack of clarity creates uncertainty for aspiring workers when weighing the cost, time and effort associated with training.



Prospective workers also typically self-fund education or training, but without clear pathways into the sector, they have to do so without confidence that it will lead to stable employment, adequate compensation, or long-term career progression within the sector. This risk is heightened by the perception that pay and working conditions may not reflect the complexity of the work, making it less appealing for individuals to invest in specialized training.

Housing societies responding to the focus group follow up survey said the following training is the most needed for staff in the sector:

57%
Conflict resolution & de-escalation

50%
Non-violent crisis intervention

44%
Cultural competency & diversity

52%
Mental health & staff wellness

40%
Trauma-informed practice

Job postings on Housing Jobs Match over the last two years showed the most frequently required training to apply to positions in the sector are:

- First Aid
- CPR
- Class 5 license
- Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System training

Practicum placements, which strengthen student pathways into the sector, present additional challenges. Training institutions reported that many non-profit housing providers lack the capacity to take on practicum students due to staffing shortages, crisis-driven work environments, or limited supervision resources. Without practicum sites, programs cannot offer experiential components that attract students and improve employability.

Formal training is often not accessible to many people who wish to work in the non-profit housing sector and who can bring important experience and skills to the sector. Indigenous students may face barriers related to the lack of culturally safe and Indigenous-led training. For people with lived-experience, affordability and lack of trauma-informed training offerings can make training inaccessible. Without formal training, people who can bring important experience and skills to the sector may be overlooked in hiring processes.



Micro-credential

A micro-credential is a short, focused training program that certifies mastery of a specific skill or knowledge area. It is designed to be flexible, stackable and quickly responsive to labour-market needs. Micro-credentials typically involve a brief course or series of modules, include an assessment of competency and result in a formal, recognized credential that can support career advancement or upskilling.

Barriers for Training Institutions in Offering Sector-Specific Training

Training institutions and programs face challenges in developing and delivering training that is tailored to the non-profit housing sector. Lack of awareness about the sector as a career destination and the lack of clear credentials needed to work in the sector create barriers for training institutions to develop and offer sector-specific programs. This lack of awareness and course requirements to work in the sector mean there is low demand for sector-specific programming and makes recruitment into those programs that do exist difficult. Training providers described uncertainty about how to "sell" programs when students ask what roles they would qualify for after completion.

The sector can struggle for institutional attention compared to fields with clear regulatory or accreditation requirements. This is compounded through a feedback loop: with no sector-wide requirements for particular courses or credentials, there is little motivation for people considering a career in the sector to invest the time and money in training, which then results in little motivation for training institutions and programs to invest in developing and offering sector-specific curriculum.

Training institutions also face challenges in offering programs that reflect the realities of the non-profit housing workforce, especially frontline roles. Programs often default to generic content because institutions lack ongoing, structured input from housing providers. Advisory committees can help ensure content is kept up-to-date and relevant, but these committees are often not maintained due to resource constraints across the post-secondary system as well as time constraints, which make it difficult for housing providers to participate.

Findings indicate following training needs:

- Sector-specific training for frontline staff
- Housing operations and building management training, specific to non-profit housing rather than market housing
- Training with practicum-integrated requirements
- Micro-credentials responding to sector-specific training needs such as mental health supports, system navigation and non-violent conflict de-escalation

What this tells us:

- Many prospective workers gain broadly transferable skills through general education and training, but there is little sector-specific training that helps them see how those skills apply to non-profit housing or positions the sector as a deliberate career choice
- Without sector-wide expectations or recognized credentials, training institutions will not be motivated to invest in sector-specific curriculum
- Until the sector is more widely recognized as a career institutions will struggle to build viable programs
- Even though they are already stretched, housing societies may benefit from dedicating time to support training institutions in offering sector-specific training, including curriculum advisory groups and taking on practicum students to facilitate recruitment of skilled staff to the sector
- Micro-credentials could provide opportunities to make sector-specific training more accessible to prospective learners and easier to invest in for training institutions

Challenge 4: Recruiting Skilled Staff

The lack of clear training pathways and shared sector identity directly affect recruitment into the non-profit housing sector, along with other factors such as the perception of careers in the sector being challenging, the wide range of skills required and skills needed relative to pay in the sector.

Housing societies responding to the focus group follow up survey said the top barriers to recruiting skilled staff are:

57%

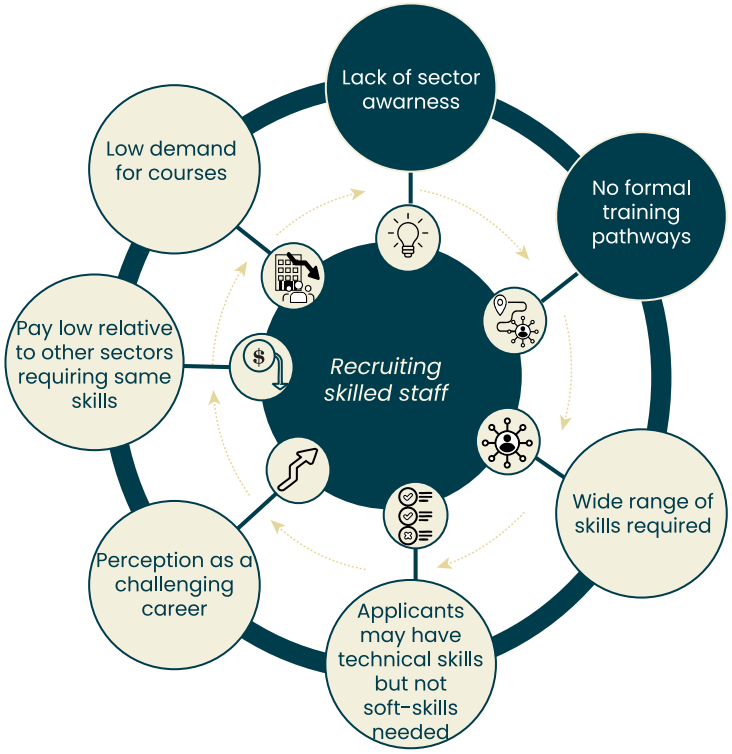
Lower pay and benefits compared to government and private housing providers

56%

Lack of qualified candidates

Note: based on responses most selected as significant barriers

Postings on Housing Jobs Match over the last two years show that frontline roles seem to struggle the least to find applicants, but there were fewer applicants for frontline roles that require nightshifts or are in rural and remote areas.



Perception as Challenging Career

The perception of the sector being a difficult career can discourage people from entering the sector. Even when the meaningful and values driven nature of the work is recognized, this is often outweighed by concerns about workload intensity, sustainability and long-term career viability, making recruitment a challenge.

Consultation participants described the sector as involving intense workloads, emotional labour and safety risks, often within systems constrained by siloed support systems and resource limitations. Without a clear sector identity that articulates the long-term career possibilities and rewards of working in this sector, the dominant perception of non-profit housing as a "challenging career" can leave prospective employees uncertain about building a sustained career in the sector.

While burnout is a challenge affecting many mission-driven and care-oriented sectors, its prevalence here reinforces for jobseekers that work in non-profit housing can be particularly demanding.

66%

of survey respondents experienced burnout related to their role or organization

69%

of survey respondents experienced burnout related to broader systemic factors

Postings open the longest over the last two years both showed the same roles that are challenging to fill:

- Property managers
- Maintenance staff
- Admin staff
- Frontline roles (including health support roles)

(Housing societies responding to the focus group follow up survey and a review of the Housing Jobs Match)

What draws people to the sector include:

- Contributing to housing stability and community wellbeing - nearly 80% of survey respondents reported satisfaction with the sense of purpose their work provides
- Values alignment with personal motivations
- Personal connection to the issue or desire to "give back"

Wide Range of Skills Required

It can be difficult to target recruitment efforts through formal training programs when there is no clear training program that leads to work in the sector. But creating a sector-specific program is also challenging in that the sector's workforce requires a wide-range of skills to fill the sector's varied roles. Skills that are needed in the non-profit housing workforce range from technical to critical soft-skills:

- Empathy and compassion
- Trauma-informed practice
- Cultural safety
- Communication and de-escalation
- Relationship building
- Adaptability and problem solving
- Crisis intervention and safety awareness
- Systems navigation, including understanding housing systems, income assistance, health and social services
- Property and building management
- Non-profit administration
- Financial and budget management
- Human resources and supervision
- IT and digital skills
- Health and mental health supports

Providers reported a persistent challenge recruiting for frontline support roles, specialized tenant support positions and technical maintenance jobs (e.g., HVAC, plumbing, electrical), among other roles.

Non-profit housing providers face increasing maintenance challenges with aging buildings, energy systems becoming outdated and increased need for capital and portfolio planning to maintain buildings. Many housing societies are undertaking complex energy retrofits and technology upgrades to reduce operating costs and respond to government sustainability targets. These infrastructure challenges are driving demand for new and highly sought-after technical skills, particularly in areas such as building systems, energy management and modernized asset maintenance.

Job Postings on Housing Jobs Match over the last years revealed average pay relative to training requirements:

- $35+/hour: dominated by Bachelor's/Certification (e.g., RN/RPN, specialist roles)
- $23–$26/hour: mostly Certification/License + High School/Associate (e.g., frontline/custodial/entry technical)

Pay Relative to Skills Required

Recruitment is also affected by the sector's compensation levels, which often do not reflect the breadth of skills required. Despite the need for staff with specialized technical abilities, sector-specific competencies and advanced interpersonal skills, wages in the non-profit housing sector are typically lower than those offered by government, health care and private housing providers. This challenge is not unique to non-profit housing, as many mission-driven sectors struggle to compete with higher-paying fields for workers with in-demand qualifications. However, this is still a contributing factor to persistent shortages in roles such as property management, maintenance, administration and specialized frontline support. As a result, even individuals motivated by the sector's mission may be drawn to other fields where similarly demanding work is compensated at higher levels.

Almost half of survey respondents said they earn less than $70,000, including 20% earning less than $50,000 and less than half felt their salary is fair for the tasks they take on and the skills they bring to their jobs. With the sector needing skills that are applicable across a range of sectors, it can be difficult to recruit workers with the skills needed.

Among those with prior experience outside non-profit housing, 45% previously worked in health care and social assistance, pointing to direct competition for similar skillsets with other sectors that have clearer training pathways and sector identities.

The Housing Jobs Match site postings over the last two years validated the average salaries reported in the employee survey. Average salary ranges by role type were:

- Clinical/health roles: $46/hour
- Operations and admin: $30/hour
- Property management and maintenance: $28/hour
- Frontline roles: $26/hour

Findings indicate following training needs:

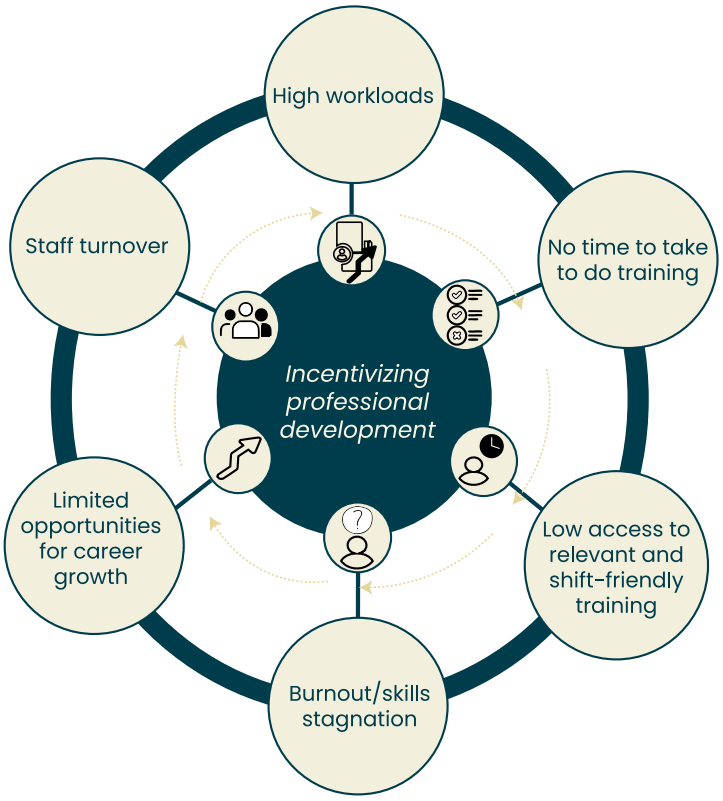
- Trauma-informed and culturally-safe practice
- Technical trades and skills through the lens of the non-profit housing sector, such as property management with empathy, as the sector is mission-driven to avoid evictions
- Sector orientation and career pathways training

What this tells us:

- Training needs to prepare prospective workers and support existing workers for the complexity, emotional labour and risks of the work, while also articulating the long-term rewards and career viability
- Cross-training, where staff are provided with opportunities to learn and perform tasks outside their primary role, could be valuable in helping workers understand how their role fits within the broader sector ecosystem, how their work impacts others and what roles exist for future career development
- Cross-training can also help reduce burnout by increasing staffing flexibility, allowing teams to better share workload pressures and provide temporary relief for workers in high-stress or understaffed positions

Challenge 5: Incentivizing Professional Development

As a sector with multiple job types and no shared framework for progression, it is often unclear where to start when looking to upskill or for professional development, how different roles connect, or what professional growth looks like over time. Workers experience barriers to accessing professional development and there are challenges for employers in offering professional development for their staff.





Workers said they are motivated to take on training because they want to move up:

70%

of survey respondents said they need more training to advance in their careers and this rises to 80% among frontline staff

35%

of housing societies responding to the focus group follow-up survey said limited career growth has an impact on staff retention

Barriers to Professional Development for Workers

Many employees reported feeling overqualified for their current roles, underutilized, or unsure how to advance within their organization. Smaller housing societies often have flat organizational structures with few supervisory or leadership positions. Without visible progression opportunities or role mobility across the sector, workers struggle to see a long-term future in their jobs. People already working in the sector face barriers to accessing professional development to improve their skills and support career growth, including:

- Lack of employer training budgets and lack of personal funds
- Heavy workloads, overtime and burnout leave little capacity for training during or outside of work hours
- Training times and any associated travel may conflict with responsibilities outside of work, such as childcare, elder care and holding more than one job
- Sector-specific training is often focused on management rather than frontline roles
- With shifts in the sector being around the clock, staff, particularly newer staff who tend to work the shifts outside of regular business hours, cannot access training during their hours of work
- Uncertainty about how training contributes to promotions, role changes, or increased compensation
- Uncertainty about what sector-specific training exists or how to identify reputable, relevant options, particularly in the absence of a centralized sector-wide training framework

While there is no sector-specific training for prospective workers to the sector, there are some sector-specific professional development opportunities. These programs include:

- Langara Community College's Non-Profit Property Management Program
- Langara Community College's Social Housing Management Short Certificate Program
- Professional development training through housing society associations including BC Non-Profit Housing Association, the Aboriginal Management Housing Association (AHMA), B.C. Society for Transition Houses (B.C.STH)
- Chartered Institute of Housing Canada

Employer Barriers to Offering Professional Development Training

Employers face barriers in offering professional development training to their employees. Funding models do not typically include funding for professional development, making it difficult to allocate resources for training costs, backfill, or paid learning time. Chronic staffing shortages and high workloads further constrain training opportunities, as organizations often lack the capacity to cover shifts when staff attend training, particularly in frontline roles. Employers also report challenges identifying training that is relevant, sector-specific and aligned with the realities of non-profit housing work. Housing societies may be hesitant to invest in training without assurance that employees will remain in their roles long enough to benefit from that investment.

Housing societies responding to the focus group survey said their top barriers to providing professional development for staff are:

81%
Coverage for staff while they are in training

69%
Cost of training programs

57%
High staff turnover

Findings indicate following training needs:

- Flexible, shift friendly professional development training
- Culturally safe, trauma-informed and accessible training programs
- Indigenous-led training programs
- On-the-job training for entry level positions and those new to working in the sector

What this tells us:

- Professional development is often unfunded or underfunded in operating budgets
- Frontline staff are less likely to access training compared to management and leadership, despite often expressing higher training needs
- When training is not clearly tied to career progression or increased compensation, there is less motivation to pursue professional development or for employers to invest in paid training for their staff
- As Indigenous peoples and people with lived-experience are over-represented in frontline roles, where access to training is more limited, training barriers reinforce inequities in professional development and career advancement

Housing societies responding to the focus group follow up survey said the following strategies have been effective for supporting staff retention:

100%
Increasing wages/benefits

100%
Offering flexible work arrangements

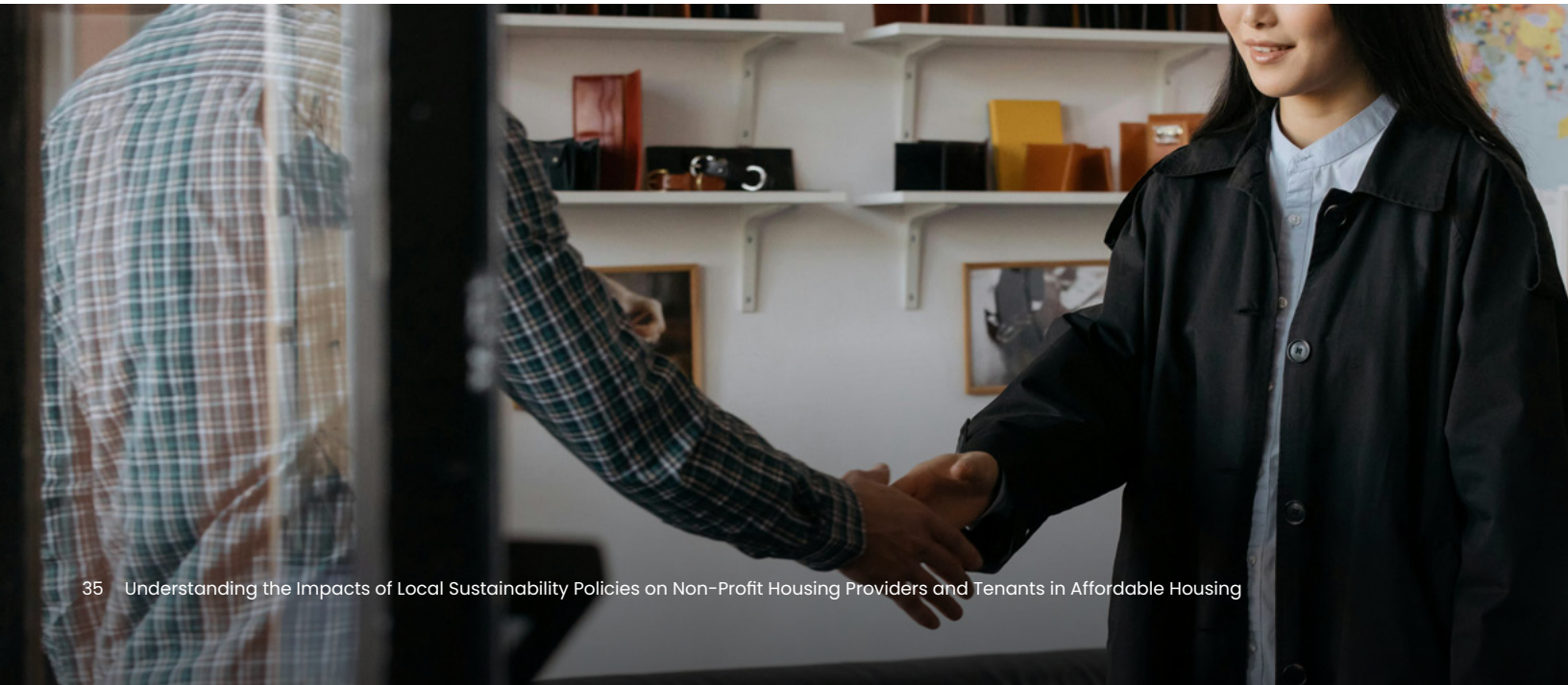
90%
Offering employee wellness programs

75%
Providing professional development opportunities

Challenge 6: Retaining Skilled Staff

Even if skilled workers can be recruited or workers can access professional development, retaining skilled workers in the sector has also proven to be a challenge. According to the employee survey, 1 in 3 workers do not plan to stay in the sector beyond 5 years, with respondents pointing to stress, burnout, compensation and work–life balance among the reasons.







Burnout, Emotional Labour and Vicarious Trauma

Staff in the sector experience significant strain due to the emotional intensity of the work. Consultations repeatedly highlighted burnout, compassion fatigue and vicarious trauma as widespread challenges. Workers often face unpredictable situations, escalating behaviours and trauma-related dynamics with limited resources or staff coverage.

43%

of frontline respondents reported vicarious trauma as a stressor

34%

of frontline respondents reported frequent stress from risk of violence

53%

of respondents said job stress or burnout would influence their decision to change jobs

Across B.C.'s wider non-profit sector, similar pressures are being reported, underscoring that burnout in the non-profit housing sector is part of a province-wide workforce crisis. Among non-profits responding to the 2025 State of BC Non-Profit Sector report:

- 41% reported increasing staff burnout
- 90% reported demand for programs exceeds capacity to deliver
- 68% reported increasing pay to retain staff

57%

of survey respondents said seeking higher pay would influence their decision to change jobs

50%

of survey respondents agreed their salary is fair for their tasks/ responsibilities

60%

of respondents said they work overtime and 29% reported no compensation for overtime

30%

of respondents cited staffing shortages/high turnover as a stressor (rising to 36% for frontline staff)

Low Compensation and Uncompetitive Benefits

Just as it creates a recruitment challenge, compensation also emerged as a central retention challenge across the sector. Workers noted that pay does not reflect the emotional labour, safety risks and complexity of non-profit housing roles. As a result, many skilled workers leave for sectors with more competitive compensation structures, such as health care, social services, or private property management.

High Workload, Staffing Shortages and Insufficient Organizational Capacity

Understaffing and vacancies are common in the sector and contribute to unmanageable workloads. Burnout can lead to staffing turnover, which coupled with recruitment challenges, further intensifies workloads. This creates a cycle where burnout drives turnover and turnover increases burnout for those who remain. Staffing shortages also reduce employers' ability to offer professional development, exacerbating both burnout and career stagnation.

Training Fit

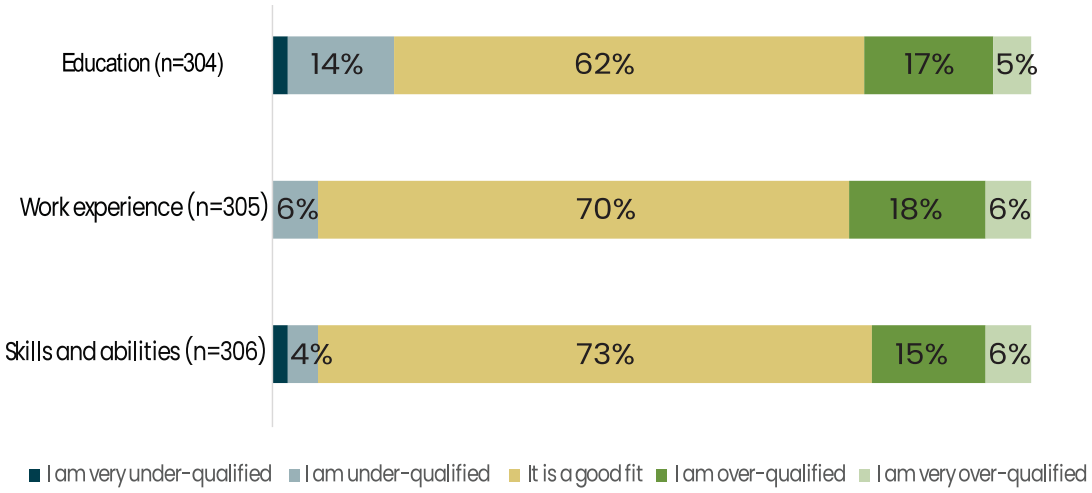
Training fit emerged as a contributor to turnover in the non-profit housing sector. Survey results and consultations revealed a complex picture in which some workers feel over-qualified, while others feel underqualified.

What is training fit?

This term captures alignment or mismatch between what roles require and what workers bring in terms of education, skills and experience.

According to the survey results, over one-fifth of the sector's workforce reported feeling over-qualified for their positions based on their education, work experience, or skills. Those with higher education were more likely to report feeling overqualified. More than one-third (35%) of respondents with a bachelor's degree or higher felt overqualified based on their education level, compared to 13 per cent of those without a bachelor's or higher degrees. Newcomers were also more likely to report feeling overqualified (26% compared to 21% for Canadian-born employees). Newcomer workers in the sector are much more likely to hold bachelor's degrees (71%) compared to Canadian-born employees (39%). At the same time, the survey showed workers in the sector were most likely to feel under-qualified (14%) based on education rather than their skills or experience (approximately 5%).

Survey Respondents by Perceived Job Fit



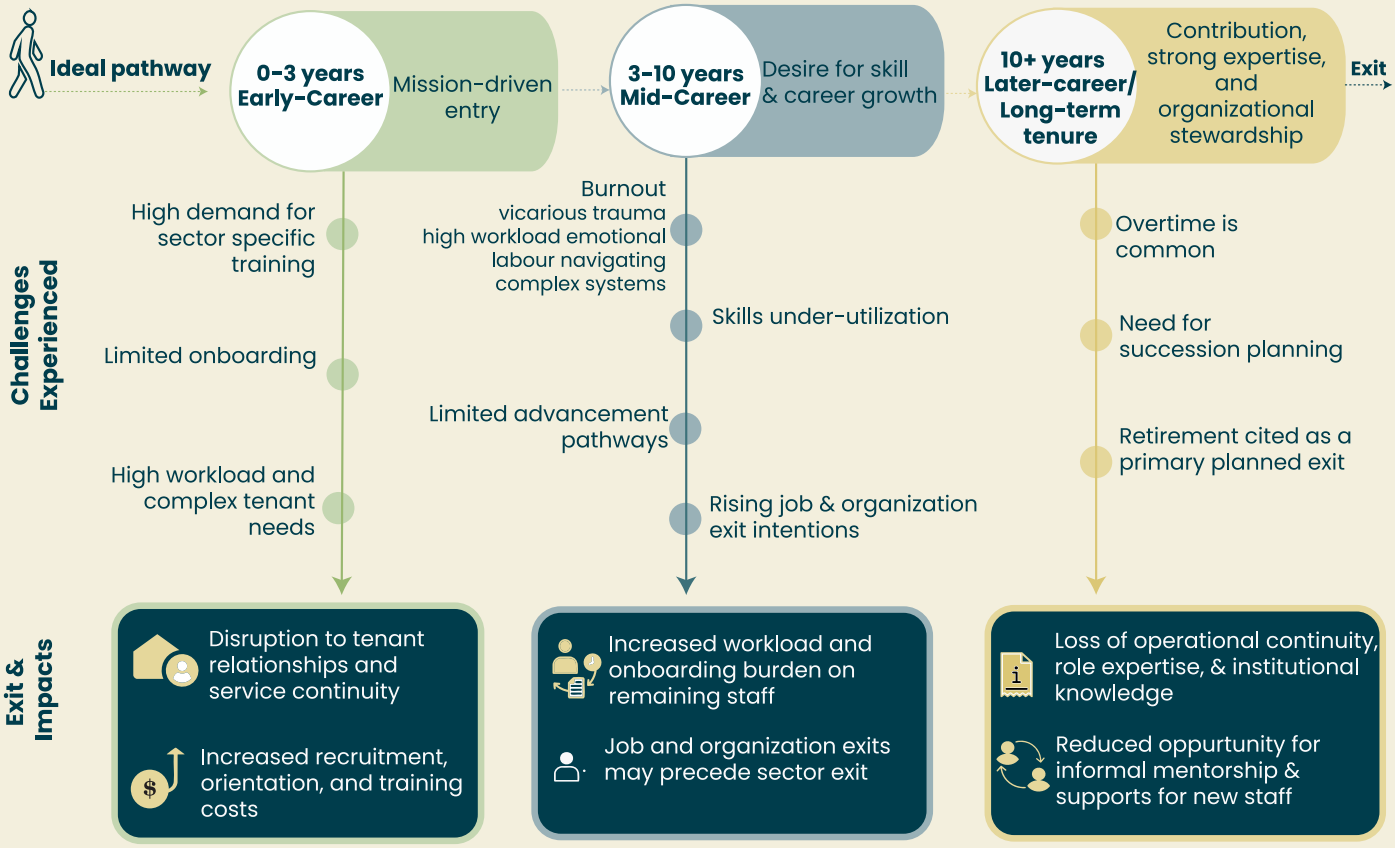
Findings indicate the following training needs:

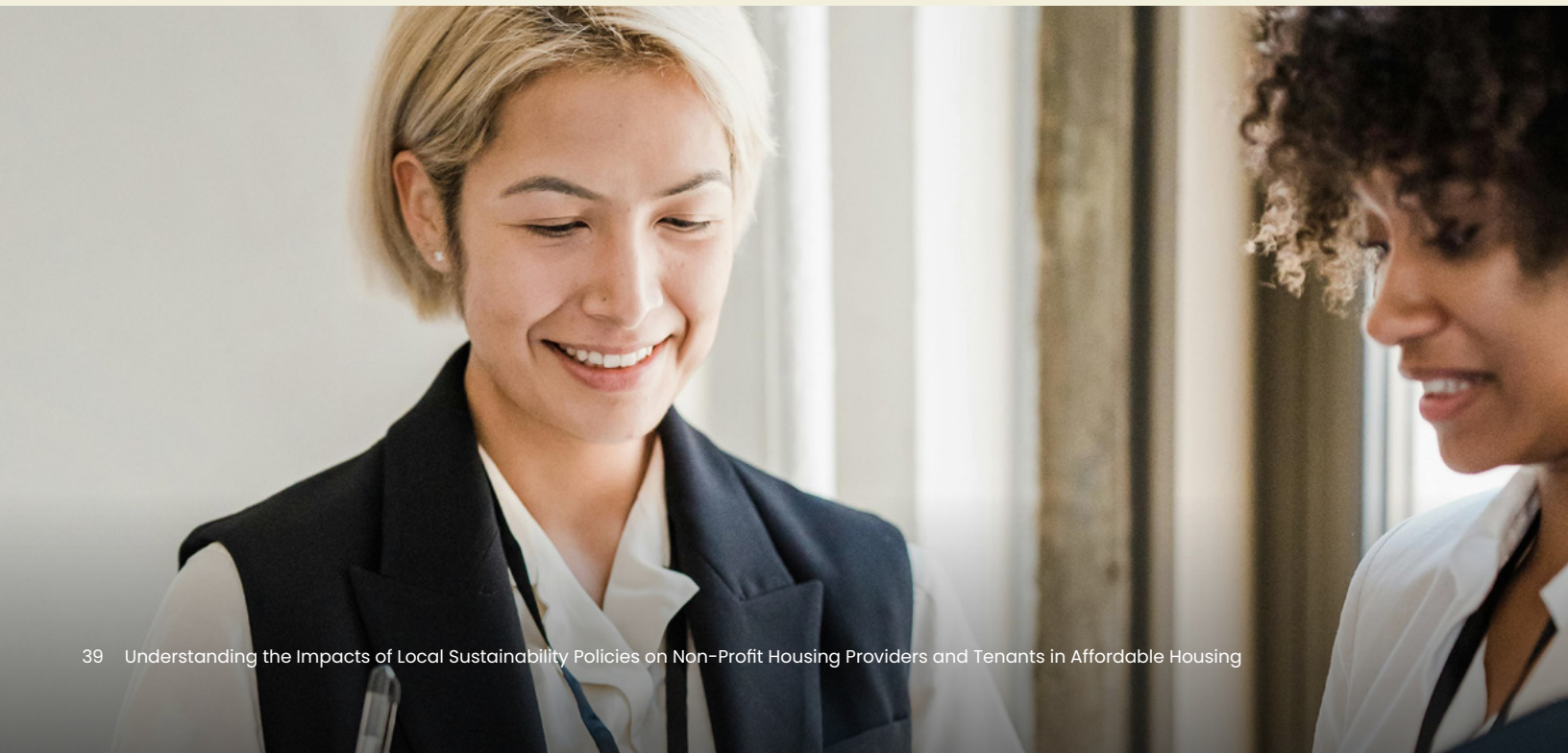
- Trauma-informed practice, de-escalation and mental health resilience training
- Leadership training to support workers

What this tells us:

- Compounding factors disincentivize professional development and limited career growth options means skills acquired through professional development may be applied elsewhere rather than within the sector
- Workers were more likely to feel underqualified based on their education than their skills, pointing to a gap in training that translates formal education into sector specific and particularly frontline specific, competencies
- Training to feel supported and safe is critical to retention of skilled workers
- Heavy workloads, overtime demands and low staffing mean many skilled workers cannot access training, so professional development training needs to be designed to be accessible during shift work, low-cost, modular and available in multiple formats

Non-Profit Housing Sector Worker Journey: Needs, Barriers and Impacts of Exits at Various Career Stages

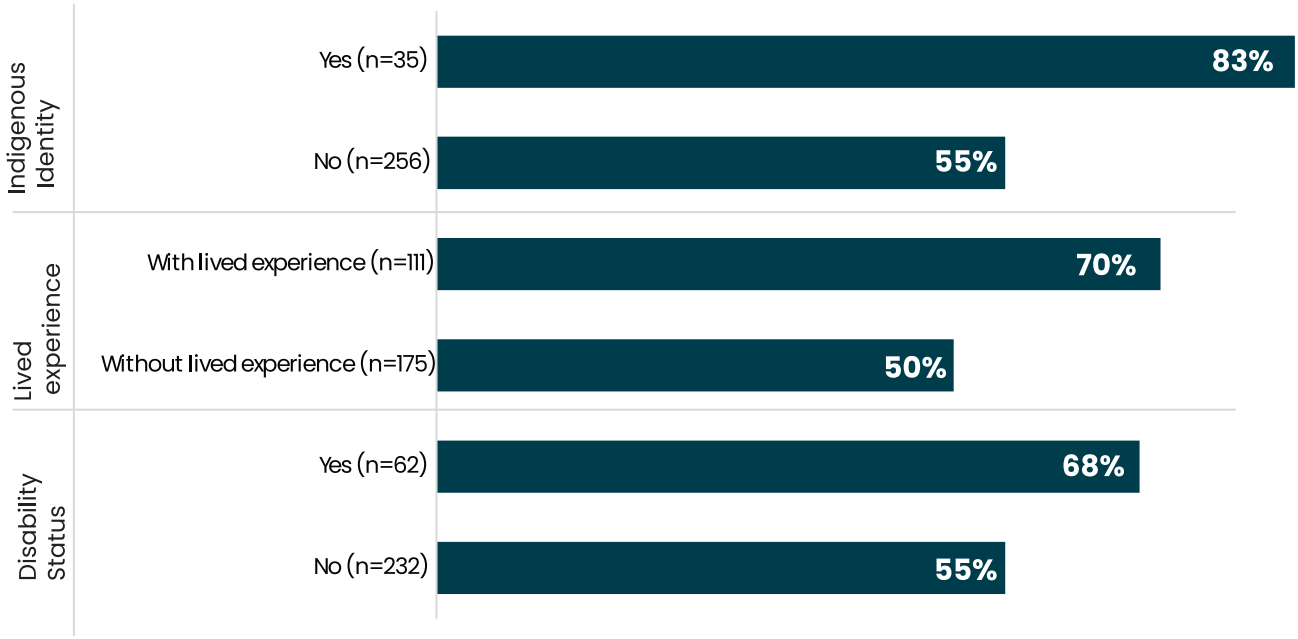




Challenge 7: Some Staff Populations and Housing Societies Experience Distinct Challenges

While the workforce challenges described above affect the entire non-profit housing sector, consultations highlighted that several groups experience these challenges more acutely or encounter additional, distinct barriers that impact training, recruitment and retention. Indigenous-led housing societies, Indigenous staff, workers and housing societies in rural and remote communities, staff with lived-experience of housing insecurity and newcomer workers often navigate overlapping and compounding challenges.

Survey Responses by Demographic Group and Whether Frontline Worker



12%

of survey respondents worked for Indigenous-led housing organizations

- **Half of Indigenous respondents worked for Indigenous-led organizations**

Indigenous-led Housing Societies and Indigenous Employees

Indigenous-led organizations and Indigenous staff working in the sector highlighted limited access to culturally safe, Indigenous-designed training. Consultations emphasized that most existing training does not reflect Indigenous worldviews or approaches to housing. Participants also noted that training is often inaccessible because it is too costly, available only through formal institutions that do not qualify for band funding or student loans, or delivered in formats that require travel away from community, extended time off, or reliable internet connections that some northern and on-reserve communities do not have.

During the consultations, Indigenous staff described facing significant emotional labour as they support tenants navigating colonial systems. The survey showed Indigenous staff are more likely to work in frontline roles (83% compared to 55% of non-Indigenous respondents) where they are exposed to more crises and vicarious trauma and are less represented in leadership roles. Indigenous staff were more likely to report frequent overtime (77% compared to 58% of non-Indigenous respondents). Indigenous staff reported higher burnout (35% vs. 22%). These factors contribute to lower retention of Indigenous staff.

Findings indicate the following training needs:

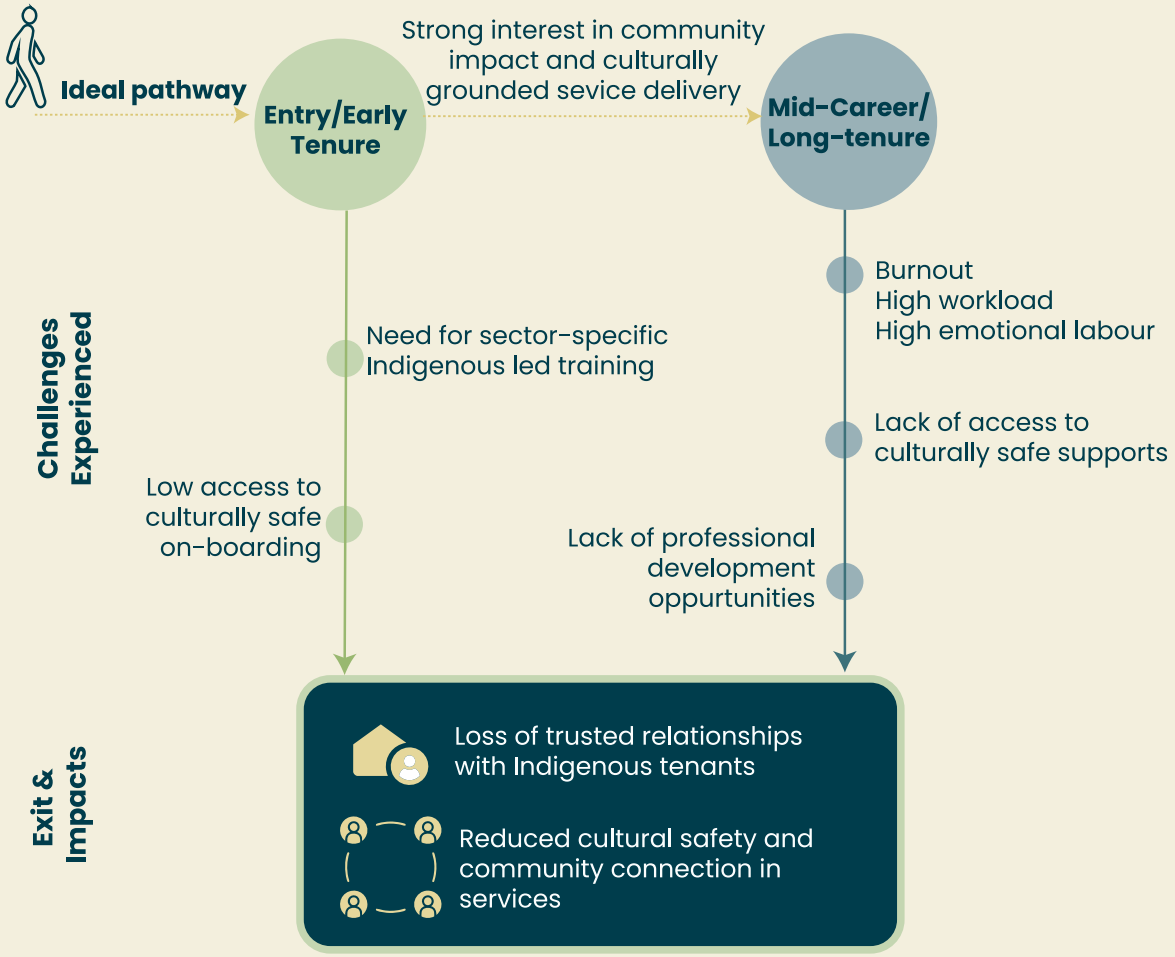
- Indigenous-led, culturally safe training streams
- Indigenous-led leadership training
- Trauma-informed practice, integrated with Indigenous worldview
- Training offerings in regions around the province
- Dedicated training for frontline staff

What this tells us:

- There is a need for Indigenous-led curricula and supports (e.g., Elders in Residence, peer circles)
- There may be barriers to job growth for Indigenous staff due to barriers to accessing training



Non-Profit Housing Sector Worker Journey – Indigenous Staff: Needs, Barriers and Impacts of Exits at Various Career Stages



25%
of survey respondents reported working in small or rural communities

Rural and Remote Housing Providers and Staff

Consultations with rural and remote housing providers highlighted that workforce challenges are intensified by geographic isolation. Participants from rural and remote locations consistently emphasized that training is significantly harder to access in rural and northern regions due to travel requirements, high training costs and unreliable or unavailable internet, which limits participation in online sessions. Many noted that in-person training is the most effective, particularly for crisis response, mechanical systems and leadership skills, but is often inaccessible because it requires extended time away, airfare, accommodation, or backfill staff that small societies do not have.

In terms of recruitment, rural and remote organizations face smaller hiring pools, intense competition with higher-paying sectors such as health authorities, mining, ports and government. Rural and remote employers in the sector also have challenges securing housing for staff, which further limits the ability to attract workers from outside the community. **The limited hiring pools make it difficult to find people with the various skills needed to support the increasingly complex needs of the people housing societies serve**.

Staff burnout is amplified by several factors affecting housing societies operating in rural and remote areas. **Staff reported feeling improperly trained for their roles because staff in small communities and working for smaller organizations commonly "wear multiple hats**," taking on maintenance, operations, crisis response and administrative tasks without relevant training. It can be challenging for employers in rural and remote areas to encourage training for staff because with a lack of training and apprenticeship options available locally, staff who leave to access training often opt to remain in the larger job markets where they did their training.

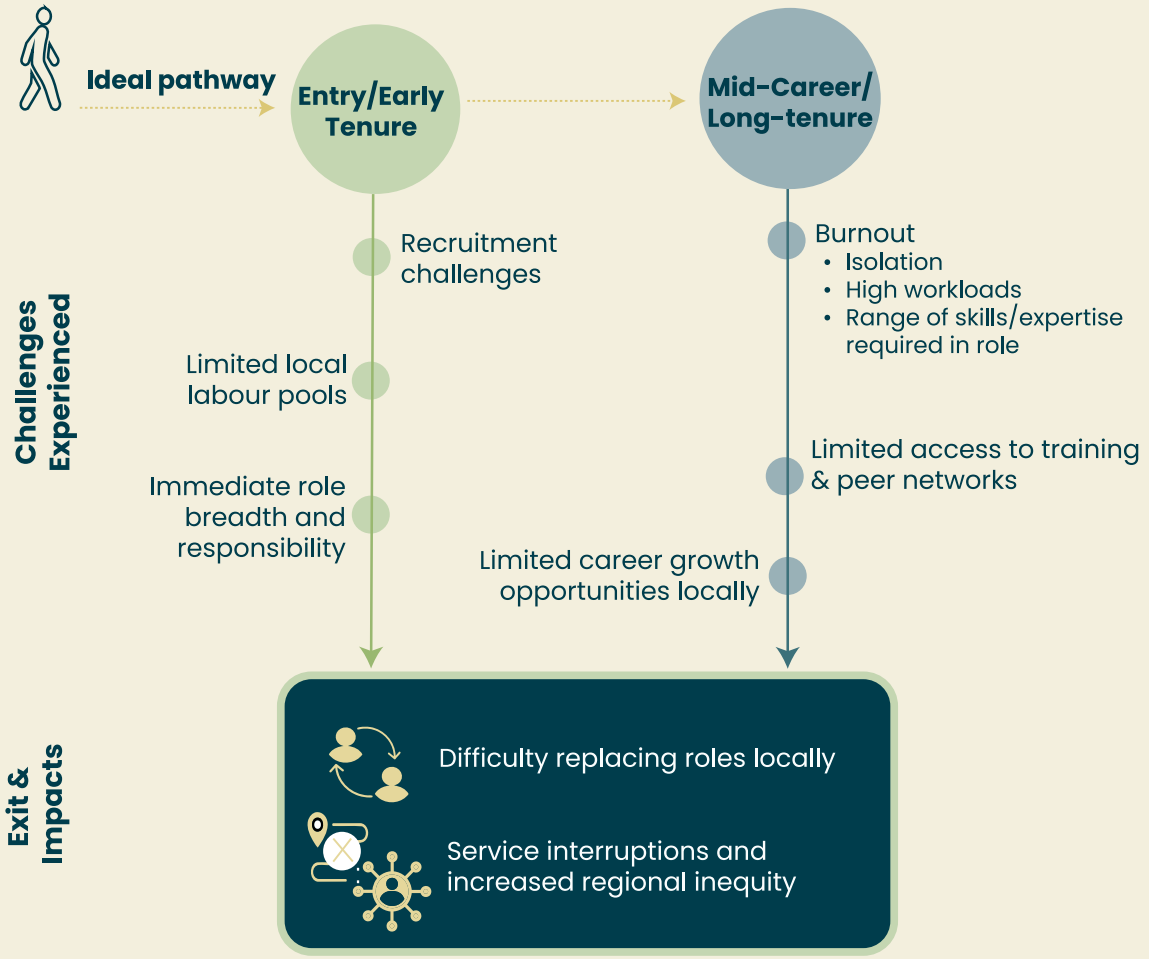
Findings indicate the following training needs:

- Regional, in-community training delivery models (e.g., mobile trainers, regional hubs)
- Practical, applied training for frontline and multi-role staff (e.g., de-escalation, operational systems, admin)
- Leadership development for small organization managers

What this tells us:

- More regional in-person training and mentorship opportunities are needed in all regions of B.C.
- Sector-specific training may need to include a broader range of skills to be applicable in the rural and remote context
- Limited hiring pools for the skills needed may mean housing societies in rural and remote areas cannot provide all the services needed to support the people they serve

Non-Profit Housing Sector Worker Journey – Staff in Rural and Remote Areas: Needs, Barriers and Impacts of Exits at Various Career Stages



77%

of respondents with lived-experience reported full-time work in the sector (compared to 86% of all respondents)

Staff with Lived-experience

Consultations and survey results highlight that staff with lived-experience often face distinct and overlapping barriers that affect their access to training, career progression and long-term retention in the sector.

Throughout the consultations, we heard that **people with lived-experience bring deep empathy, strong values alignment and credibility when supporting tenants**. People with lived-experience face barriers in terms of accessing work in the sector due to challenges in accessing formal pre-training opportunities. **Education requirements in sector job postings often do not recognize the competencies and soft skills developed through lived-experience**.

People with lived-experience working in the sector also face barriers to accessing professional development. People with lived-experience were more likely to be working in frontline positions (70% compared to 50% of those without lived-experience). Survey respondents with lived-experience were also more likely to report the need for more training.

Despite the valuable experience people with lived-experience bring to their roles, multiple and overlapping challenges make it difficult for the sector to retain people with lived-experience. According to the survey, because people with lived-experience are more likely to have frontline roles, they have higher rates of part-time work and lower incomes compared to others working in the sector. People in frontline roles are also more likely to experience workplace stress and vicarious trauma, as they are more likely to work in frontline roles.

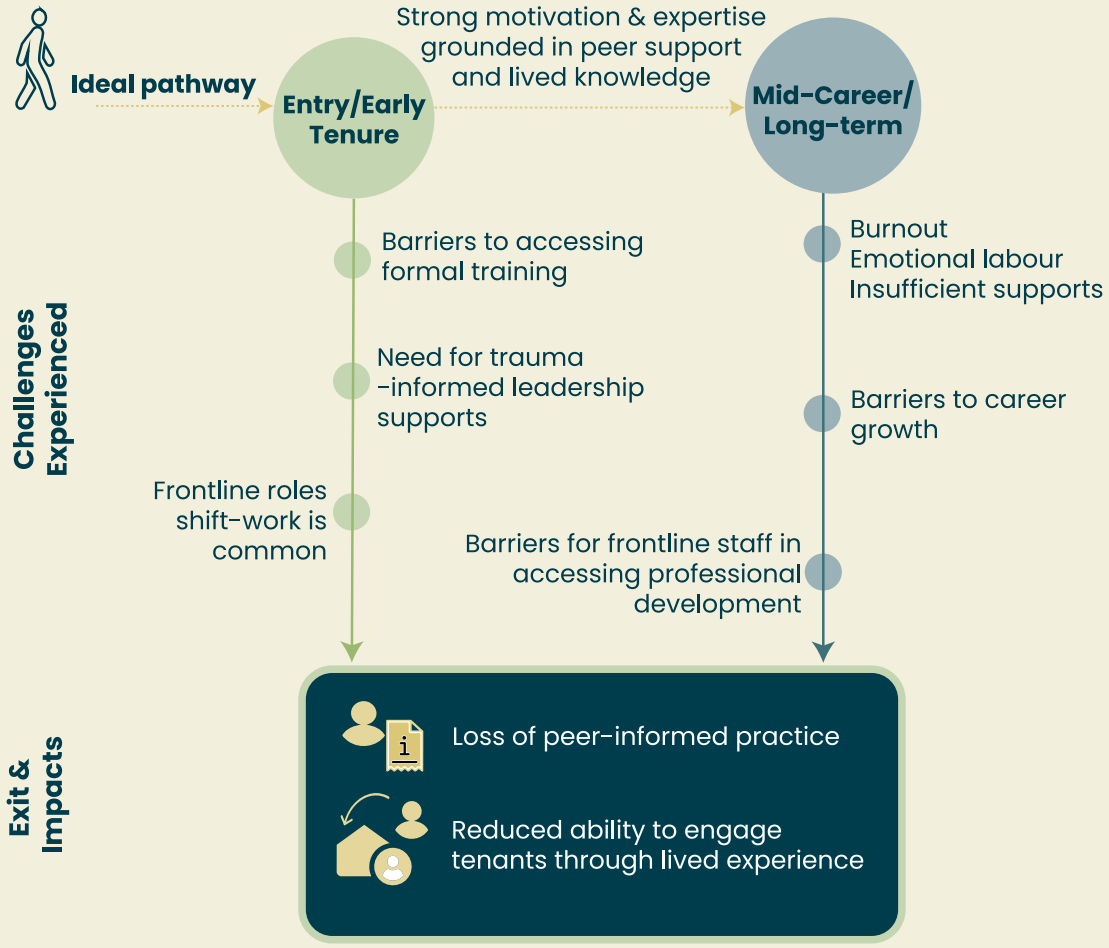
Findings indicate the following training needs:

- Trauma-informed practice, de-escalation and mental health informed approaches tailored for frontline realities
- Sector-wide training offerings that can even the playing field for those who may experience barriers to accessing training

What this tells us:

- Existing training requirements to work in the sector create barriers to recruiting people with relevant skills and experience, who can bring the soft skills to the sector that are difficult to acquire through training
- People with lived-experience face barriers to job growth once working in the sector
- It may be better to recruit for soft-skills and experience and then provide employer paid training to fill in training gaps (e.g., earn-while-learn models, supports with job placements after training completions)
- Stronger leadership development pathways are needed to support staff with lived-experience into supervisory and management roles

Non-Profit Housing Sector Worker Journey – Staff with Lived-experience: Needs, Barriers and Impacts of Exits at Various Career Stages



Newcomers to Canada

Consultations and literature noted seeing more newcomers entering the sector in recent years. Consultation findings and survey results indicate that newcomers to Canada face distinct barriers that influence their ability to gain employment in the sector, advance within organizations and remain long-term. It is also believed that newcomers were underrepresented in the survey sample (newcomers represented 21% of respondents).

In many cases, newcomers bring strong educational backgrounds to their roles in the sector. Over two-thirds of newcomer respondents reported having a bachelor's degree or higher (compared to 32% of non-newcomer respondents). **Their perspectives, multilingual abilities and cultural**

competency were highlighted during the consultations as important assets that strengthen service delivery, particularly in diverse tenant communities.

Despite these strengths, newcomers face multiple barriers to accessing sector jobs. Many experience challenges having their international education and experience recognized. Employers noted that some positions include Canadian experience requirements or certification expectations that may not fully account for the transferable skills newcomers bring. Consultations also highlighted the need for funded language training. Newcomers also face challenges in accessing jobs in the sector because some of the sector's jobs are not full-time, which can prevent people from using the work toward permanent residency applications.

Once employed in the sector, newcomers can experience challenges in accessing professional development. Newcomers who responded to the survey were disproportionately affected by financial and time-related barriers to training. Survey findings showed that newcomers were more likely than Canadian-born workers to hold multiple jobs (25% compared to 14%), which could reduce their ability to participate in training due to scheduling conflicts. Newcomers are also more concentrated in the Lower Mainland, where cost of living and housing costs are highest and many reported the need for more hours or higher pay, which further constrains their availability for professional development.

In addition to the stress of working more jobs, **newcomers were also more likely to feel overqualified for their positions, especially those working in frontline roles, which can create barriers to retention**. Newcomers also reported stress related to uncertainty around advancement pathways.

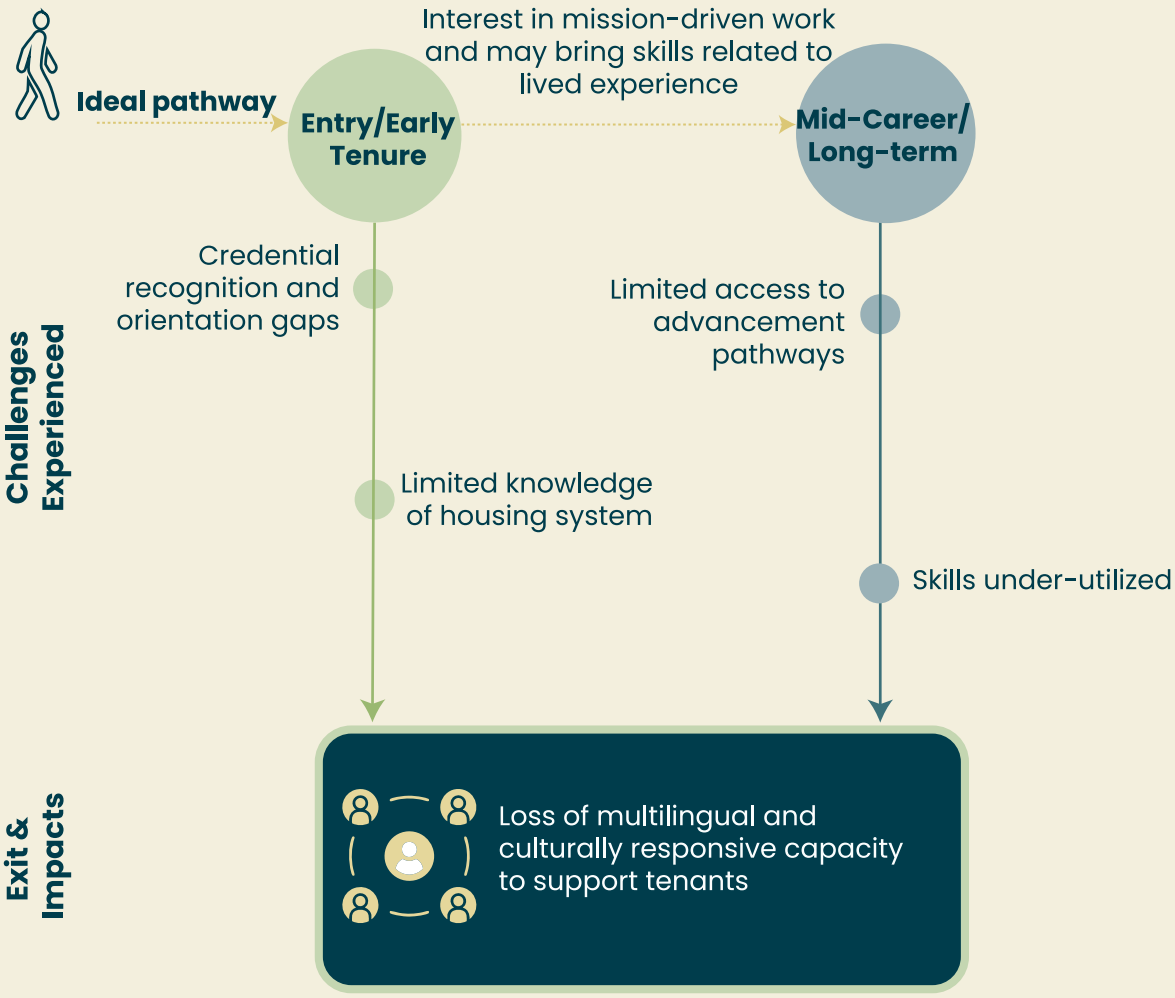
Findings indicate the following training needs:

- Government-funded English-language training, including language training that is sector-specific
- Orientation to the Canadian housing system, tenant law and service infrastructure

What this tells us:

- Skilled and educated newcomers face barriers to entering the sector, often due to lack of recognition of international credentials, language requirements and expectations for Canadian work experience
- Newcomers are more likely to feel overqualified for their current positions, suggesting a mismatch between their training/experience and the roles available to them
- Clearer and more inclusive leadership pathways are needed to ensure newcomers can move into supervisory, management and specialized roles

Non-Profit Housing Sector Worker Journey – Newcomer Staff: Needs, Barriers and Impacts of Exits at Various Career Stages





Regional Workforce Training, Recruitment and Retention Differences Across B.C.'s Non-Profit Housing Sector:

Across consultations and survey findings, geography plays an important role in terms of access to training and the ability of housing societies to recruit and retain skilled workers. Differences in population size, labour market competition, access to training and local infrastructure create distinct workforce conditions in the Lower Mainland, Vancouver Island, the Interior and Northern, as well as rural communities.

Survey Respondents by Region of Work

44% Lower Mainland

20% Vancouver Island

24% Interior

11% North

Training Access and Needs

Northern B.C. and Rural/Remote Communities
Workers and employers in northern and remote regions face some of the most substantial barriers to training access.

- Training often requires extensive travel, accommodation and backfill, making participation costly and impractical, especially for small organizations
- Limited or unreliable internet connectivity also restricts access to virtual learning options
- With staff in smaller and remote communities often having to take on multiple roles within their organizations (e.g., maintenance, crisis response, administrative tasks and tenant support duties), training needs are broader and more operational

Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island
Housing societies in more urban regions benefit from higher concentrations of training institutions, professional networks and sector events.

- Survey data shows that educational attainment is highest in these regions (57% bachelor's+ in the Lower Mainland; 51% on Vancouver Island)
- Despite better access to training, workers in these areas reported difficulty accessing training because of staffing shortages, shift schedules and caseload demands

Interior
Interior providers report moderate access to training, better than in the North but more limited than in major urban centres.

- Training often requires travel to larger hubs and organizations struggle to send staff due to small teams and the need for backfill
- Needs mirror province-wide priorities but are constrained by regional program availability

Recruitment of Skilled Workers

Northern B.C. and Rural/Remote Communities
Employers consistently described recruitment as one of their most significant pressures.

- Housing societies in these communities have small labour pools and limited local amenities to attract staff
- Housing societies compete with higher-paying sectors such as industrial employers
- Housing for staff is often not available locally, restricting the ability to recruit from outside the region

Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island
Although applicant pools are larger, recruitment is challenged by high housing costs, competition with other public sector employers and a tight labour market.

- Urban providers report difficulty attracting and retaining workers for lower paid frontline roles, particularly in supportive housing and shelter settings

Interior

- Filling specialized roles (e.g., maintenance staff, building operators) remains difficult
- Workers with higher education often leave for larger centres with more competitive wages and advancement opportunities

Emerging Skills Needed in B.C.'s Non-Profit Housing Sector's Workforce

The skills required across B.C.'s non-profit housing sector are evolving as housing societies navigate a shifting funding environments, technological changes and climate change.

Findings indicate the following training needs:

- Alternative sources of capital
- Financial modelling
- New government funding source navigation
- Modern methods of construction
- AI literacy and applied use training
- Climate-related emergency and resilience training

Shifting Funding Environments

The funding landscape for non-profit organizations shifts frequently. For example, recent changes to provincial to access for capital funding and ongoing cost pressures are reshaping some of the skills needed by B.C.'s non-profit housing sector's workforce. At the federal level, the transition to the new Build Canada Homes framework will also require non-profit housing societies to adapt to new application processes and funding priorities.

As a result of this changing landscape, staff and leadership may require more financial modelling abilities and capacity to evaluate and secure alternative sources of capital. Skills in strategic asset management, portfolio planning and risk assessment are becoming more important as organizations work to preserve aging stock without predictable funding streams.

Technological Changes

With the emergence of AI, there may be opportunities to use this technology to streamline work to adapt. Those who participated in the consultations reported limited use of AI at this time because of privacy issues and the view that jobs in the non-profit housing sector require soft skills not available through AI, such as empathy. There were also concerns about the accuracy of the technology, so there was a reluctance to rely on AI for case planning. However, some opportunities to use AI were noted, such as assisting with HR to streamline hiring and ensuring applicant fit. The 2025 State of B.C. Non-Profit Sector Report showed that AI adoption across B.C.'s non-profit sector generally has been mixed. The Vantage Point survey found approximately 50% of respondents reported increased AI usage for programs, services and activities, while 31% said it is not applicable for their program or service delivery.

Climate Change

New challenges are also emerging in the sector to respond to increasing and more severe climate-related emergencies, requiring an expanded skillset across frontline and operations teams, such as competencies in emergency planning, hazard mitigation and continuity planning to respond to heat, wildfires and flooding.

Sector-Driven Solutions

These challenges, while substantial, are not insurmountable. Across focus groups and surveys, housing providers repeatedly identified practical, sector-initiated solutions that do not require major policy change or new regulatory frameworks.

This section summarizes the solutions identified through consultations, focus groups, surveys, literature review and prioritization sessions. While many of the study's participants feel workforce challenges for the sector are rooted in government funding models, system gaps, wage inequities and broader labour market dynamics, this report focuses on solutions that the sector itself can lead or significantly influence. Some solutions may require partnership with funders, government, or training institutions, but they reflect approaches that can be advanced through collective action.

The subsequent Strategic Plan re-organizes these solutions based on feasibility, impact and implementation timeline, identifying short-, medium- and long-term actions most appropriate for sector-led and collective implementation.

Please note: several of these sector-driven solutions would be relevant for addressing more than one challenge area but have been placed where they fit best to avoid repetition. While many of the sector-driven solutions address worker demographic or provider-type specific challenges, only those that are specific are identified in that section. Appendix 3 maps the solutions to the other challenges they address.

Solutions to Challenge 1: Sector Awareness and Identity

What we heard

The sector lacks a shared identity and narrative that communicates career options, competencies and long-term pathways. This dampens recruitment and hinders alignment across training providers.

Sector-driven solutions

Goal	Sector-Driven Solutions Proposed	Benefit
Define and promote a collective identity and shared understanding of training needs	• Co-develop core sector values, competencies and shared language • Launch sector-wide awareness campaign	• Strengthens recognition of sector as a career field • Helps align training providers around shared competencies • Improves recruitment messaging consistency across organizations • Builds pride and belonging among staff
Sector-wide on-boarding	• Standardized orientation modules for new staff • Cross-organizational mentorship to embed identity	• Creates a common foundation for all new workers • Reduces administrative burden for individual housing societies • Improves early retention by providing clarity and support • Reinforces sector identity and shared values
Sector outreach	• Targeted job fairs at formal training institutions • High-school outreach (e.g., guest speakers, offering volunteer roles for students) • Post-secondary partnerships tied to practicum placements	• Increases awareness among students and early career workers • Helps build long-term talent pathways • Improves fit between applicants and sector

Solutions to Challenge 2: Pathways into the Sector

What we heard

People often "fall into" the sector rather than arriving via clear, visible pathways. Training routes are fragmented. Workers come from a wide variety of training and work experience.

Sector-driven solutions

Goal	Sector-Driven Solutions	Benefit
Build visible entry pathways with education partners	• Host post-secondary job fairs • Create experiential opportunities (e.g., case competitions, community engaged research) • Implement sector-specific accreditation for housing societies	• Clarifies pathways into working in the sector for people seeking relevant training • Signals that non-profit housing is a defined career path, improving recruitment • Increases the number of practicum and experiential learning opportunities

Solutions to Challenge 3: Barriers to Accessing Training

What we heard

Prospective students do not see the sector as a career destination, so do not plan their training around careers in the sector. Prospective workers with relevant expertise may experience barriers to accessing formal training. Training institutions reported uncertain demand, costly curriculum development and inconsistent sector-wide credential requirements, making it challenging to justify new or sustained sector specific training offerings.

Sector-driven solutions

Goal	Sector-Driven Solutions	Benefit
Develop sector specific credentials	• Have agreed upon training requirements for the sector to ensure demand for courses • Collaborate on micro-credentials and certificate streams tied to core competencies (frontline, operations, property/building management)	• Clarifies what training is needed to help prospective employees focus their studies • Ensures training is relevant to work in sector • Reduces onboarding burden for employers • Creates demand for sector-specific courses to justify investments in curriculum development
Sector partnerships with training programs	• Participate in training program advisory groups to inform curriculum development that is relevant to sector • Develop sector-specific curriculum with training providers and structured supports to connect graduates with employer interviews and opportunities within the sector • Create sector-specific certification process for staff	• Ensures training offerings are relevant to the realities of working in sector • Ensures curriculum reflects real workforce needs • Increases likelihood of sustainable, relevant programs

Solutions to Challenge 4: Recruiting Skilled Staff

What we heard

Recruitment is constrained by unclear entry routes, limited public visibility, competition with higher paying sectors and difficulty conveying the complexity and rewards of the work. Maintenance and frontline positions are particularly hard to fill.

Sector-driven solutions

Goal	Sector-Driven Solutions Proposed	Benefit
Shared services and pooled benefits	• HR resources could be shared across organizations • Housing societies could pool funding to create sector pension or other benefits • Partner with other organizations in sector to share resources such as IT, HR, etc. • Pilot AI tools to screen for values/soft skills and match candidates to roles • Housing societies could pool funding across organizations to promote jobs in sector • Set up partnerships with specialized service providers to offer expanded supports for tenants to multiple housing societies across a region	• Reduces administrative burden for individual organizations • Allows access to benefits that could not be offered by individual organizations, but make working in the sector more appealing • Reduces recruitment efforts for each housing society
Create opportunities for people to test their fit	• Create a volunteer stream for students at Housing Central Conference and other sector training events • Expand co-ops/practica for post-secondary students • Hire staff with soft-skills needed and then staff access training through sector-specific programs	• Helps prospective workers understand the realities of the work • Improves success of new hires • Strengthens practicum-to-employment pathways • Introduces more people to the sector earlier in their careers

Solutions to Challenge 5: Professional Development and Career Growth

What we heard

Workers face cost, time, shift and travel barriers; employers struggle to fund training/backfill; frontline training options are limited and not always aligned to job realities.

Sector-driven solutions

Goal	Sector-Driven Solutions Proposed	Benefit
Flexible training	• Modular sector-specific training • Sector-specific micro-credentials • More regional in-person training	• Reduces access barriers for shift workers, rural/ remote staff and frontline roles • Makes training possible even with limited budgets or travel constraints • Supports equity by improving access for staff with lived-experience, Indigenous staff and staff with disabilities
Cohort training and communities of practice	• Offer role or housing type-based cohort training • Offer sector-wide mentorship opportunities • Offer cross-role job shadowing to encourage learning	• Builds networks to reduce isolation • Shared learning • Makes training more accessible to all roles within organizations
Employer paid training	• Offer paid learning time for staff • Employers pay for renewable certifications relevant to roles • Offer pay bonuses if training cannot necessarily lead to career growth • Require retention of a minimum time for employer paid training	• Makes training more accessible, particularly for those not in leadership roles • Promotes career growth • Can contribute to staff retention
Identify relevant training opportunities	• Create a listing or program of relevant training for employers or staff to see what is available • Create AI enabled training navigators	• Makes it easier to find sector-relevant training

Solutions to Challenge 6: Retaining Skilled Staff

What we heard

Retention challenges reflect burnout, vicarious trauma, workload, overtime, perceived pay inequities and limited career progression. Many workers feel overqualified or under-supported and see unclear links between training and advancement.

Sector-driven solutions

Goal	Sector-Driven Solutions Proposed	Benefit
Recognition programs	• Sector-wide recognition or awards for long-term service, innovation, or leadership • Create resources to help housing societies have staff recognition procedures	• Shows staff they are valued when salaries may be less compared to other sectors • Recognizes people stay in the sector even though the work can be challenging • Boosts staff morale and contributes to a positive organizational culture
Well-being supports	• Have protocols for routine debriefing • Access mental health and wellness apps tailored to the sector, with features like anonymous check-ins, self-care resources and peer support • Create sector-specific training programs and resources to support staff mental health • Create sector-specific management training to ensure strong leadership, so staff are well supported • Partner with specialized mental health organizations to deploy rotating professionals across communities to support staff • Find opportunities for team-based shifts (e.g. social worker with someone with lived-experience) • Set up partnerships with specialized service providers to offer expanded supports for tenants to multiple housing societies across a region so staff do not have to take on multiple roles	• Reduces job stress by providing structured mental health resources • Helps prevent burnout through trauma-informed supervision and regular debriefing • Strengthens staff resilience and confidence in managing complex tenant needs • Enhances retention by making workplaces more supportive and sustainable

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Goal	Sector-Driven Solutions Proposed	Benefit
Consistent practices across housing societies	• Sector-standard wage bands by role (regionally adjusted) • Transparent career paths • Fair scheduling practices for new hires • Conduct sector-wide exit interviews and analysis	• Reduces competition for staff across organizations by standardizing wages and expectations • Improves fairness and transparency for workers entering or moving within the sector
Career growth within sector	• Offer mentorship opportunities to encourage career growth • Encourage movements across organizations to create more opportunities for job growth, particularly for smaller organizations • Develop leadership from within sector to facilitate and incentivize career growth • Include voices from other sectors in training events to inspire new ideas for sector	• Helps staff see clear opportunities for advancement without leaving the sector • Expands career options, especially for workers in smaller organizations with limited internal mobility • Encourages retention by signaling long-term career possibilities within non-profit housing

Solutions to Challenge 7: Solutions for Groups Experiencing Distinct Challenges

What we heard

Some workforce challenges are intensified for specific provider types and staff populations. The sector identified tailored, practicable approaches summarized below.

Sector-driven solutions

Reducing Barriers For:	Sector-Driven Solutions Proposed (Specific)	Benefit
Indigenous-led providers and Indigenous staff	• Offer more Indigenous-led training • Offer cultural safety training for all staff in sector; embed in other training programs • Create a committee of Indigenous educators, leaders and staff to ensure existing and future training materials are cultural relevant and safe • Provide sector-led training for funders to better understand how and why Indigenous-led providers operate differently Provide culturally safe and holistic support services for Indigenous staff • Increase public awareness of the work done by Indigenous housing providers and community impacts of this work • Create Indigenous-led apprenticeship programs • Have housing society offices or liaison on-reserve to help with recruiting and retaining Indigenous staff	• Improves access to culturally safe, relevant and trauma-informed training that reflects Indigenous worldviews • Helps reduce barriers to career advancement by increasing access to Indigenous designed professional development • Strengthens retention by addressing emotional labour, burnout and overtime pressures common for Indigenous staff • Ensures training materials are reviewed through an Indigenous lens, improving quality and safety across the sector • Helps funders and sector partners better understand the distinct operating realities of Indigenous led providers

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Reducing Barriers For:	Sector-Driven Solutions Proposed (Specific)	Benefit
Rural and remote providers	• Asynchronous/low-bandwidth training options • Offer training through mobile trainers • Create regional training hubs • Create rural/remote communities of practice • Create local apprenticeship opportunities for local trades • Provide in-person training for maintenance of mechanical systems that can provide information on specific properties in the context of rural and remote locations • Explore AI opportunities for doing maintenance remotely • Conduct research to identify models for workforce housing • Conduct cross-sector research to identify models for incentivizing staff to take jobs in rural/remote areas • Host rural/remote specific job fairs • Market sector's work in rural/remote areas (e.g. award at Housing Central Conference for housing society in rural remote area) • Career coaching to help rural/remote staff map their career pathways (e.g., how to grow career in small organization, how to access training, etc.) • Have rotating staff with particular expertise who can be shared across organizations or who are cross-trained and can fill in while staff are at training	• Increases training access in regions where travel, cost, staffing shortages and internet connectivity limit participation • Reduces burnout by supporting staff who often hold multiple roles without adequate training • Strengthens candidate pools and recruitment pathways in communities with small labour pools and high competition from industry/ government • Builds local capacity through apprenticeships and region-specific training • Reduces professional isolation through regional hubs and communities of practice • Helps rural/remote societies attract and retain staff by addressing unique housing, workload and geographic challenges

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Reducing Barriers For:	Sector-Driven Solutions Proposed (Specific)	Benefit
Staff with lived-experience	• Develop HR resources to recognize lived-experience • Offer earn-while-you-learn training • Create sector-wide program to offer training to people with lived-experience while working • Offer structured supports to connect people with lived-experience graduating from sector-relevant training with employer interviews and opportunities within the sector • pursuing training opportunities Create dedicated leadership pathways and mentorship • Embed mental health supports into training	• Recognizes lived-experience as a valuable form of expertise and reduces barriers created by formal training requirements • Creates equitable pathways into the sector for people who face systemic barriers to accessing traditional training • Supports retention by offering affordable, accessible and shift-friendly training • Helps staff with lived-experience advance into leadership roles through tailored mentorship and development pathways • Strengthens workplace culture by ensuring training and HR practices value the contributions of staff with lived-experience • Reduces burnout for staff more likely to be in frontline roles and exposed to trauma
Newcomers	• Create and offer sector-specific language training • Offer orientation to housing/tenant law/ service navigation training • Provide HR resources to better recognize international experience and credentials	• Helps employers recognize international credentials and transferable skills, reducing underemployment • Improves access to sector specific language training, increasing employability and job confidence
Frontline staff	• Offer frontline specific training • Develop sector-wide best practices that promote fairness for frontline staff (e.g. assigning only undesirable shifts to new hires)	• Improves access to training that reflects the realities of demanding, high intensity frontline work • Ensures consistent standards across organizations for early training and role expectations • Helps stabilize the workforce and reduce burnout in the roles with the highest vacancy and turnover rates

Training Provider Perspective

Training providers emphasized that sustainable training relevance depends on ongoing dialogue and shared understanding, rather than one-time consultations.

As the sector considers how to translate workforce findings into **strategic action, training providers emphasized the importance of strengthening feedback loops between employers and training institutions.** During the study's consultations, training providers consistently noted that uncertainty about employer needs, demand and uptake is a major barrier to investing in sector-specific training.

Training providers indicated they are more likely to design and sustain relevant offerings when:

- Sector training priorities are clearly articulated and consolidated
- There is clarity about which roles and regions are experiencing the greatest workforce pressure
- There are some sector-specific courses that are required by role to ensure demand
- Clear articulation of priority learner groups—such as frontline staff, supervisors, or new entrants—was identified as an important factor in designing relevant and appropriately scoped offerings
- Housing societies support training institutions in offering applied learning opportunities (e.g., practicum supervision or work-integrated experiences)
- Housing societies dedicate the time needed to inform the curriculum design to ensure it reflects the realities of the work
- Sector training needs need to communicate emerging workforce needs, recognizing that program development cycles can be long particularly if decision-making windows are missed
- Sector employers recognize the importance of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) and prior learning and experience (including lived-experience and related work), to reduce duplication, improve access for working adults and support program uptake

From the training provider perspective, these signals help reduce the risk of developing programs that do not align with real-world conditions or fail to attract learners.

These insights point to the importance of **sector-level coordination and communication** as part of workforce strategy. Strengthening how the sector collectively articulates training needs, delivery constraints and role pathways can help align post-secondary and training investments with employer realities, reinforcing a feedback loop that supports relevance, uptake and long-term workforce sustainability.

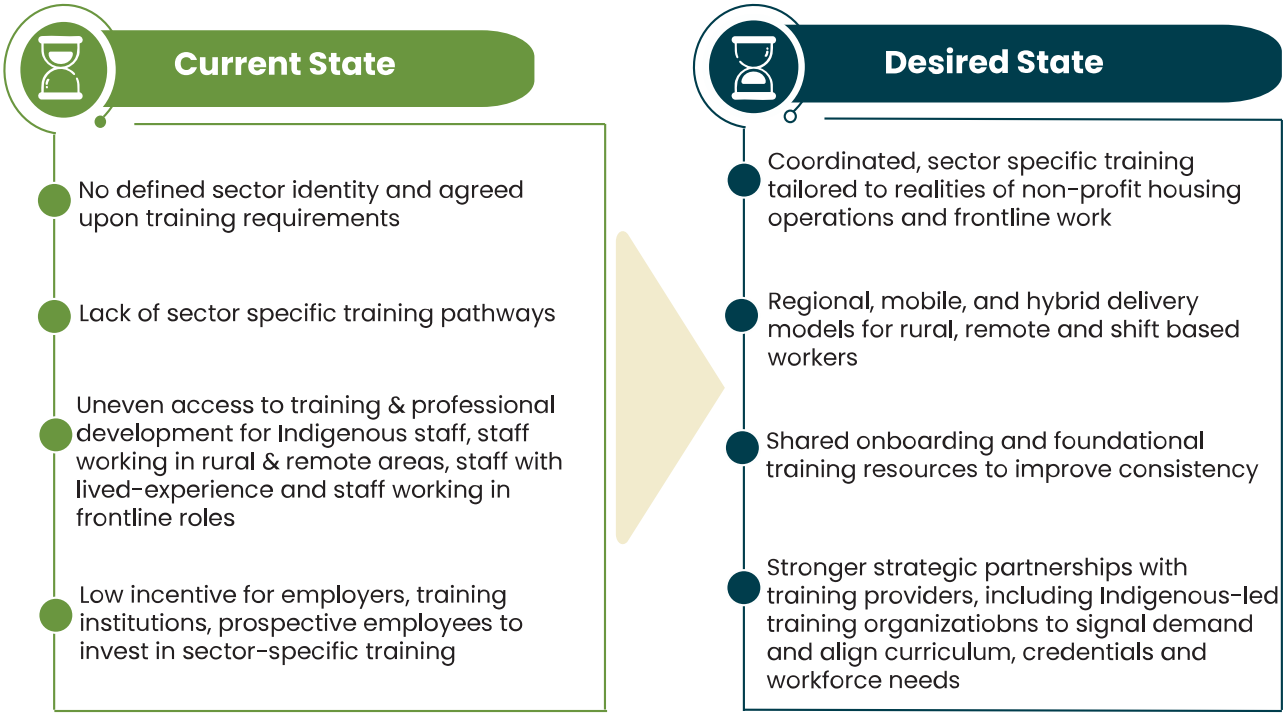


Vision for Future System

Shifting Reinforcing Systems

The workforce challenges identified in this study are not isolated issues, but the result of **reinforcing systems** that constrain entry into the sector, limit access to training and professional development and discourage long-term investment by employers and training institutions. Without intervention, these feedback loops perpetuate fragmented training pathways, staffing shortages, burnout and inequitable access to advancement.

The desired state vision outlined below represents a **deliberate shift away from these self-reinforcing dynamics**. By coordinating training pathways, strengthening sector-wide signaling and aligning training with career progression, sector-led strategies can interrupt the mechanisms that currently limit workforce development.



B.C.'s non-profit housing sector can work towards the desired state for its training system through the following reinforcing actions:

- **Coordinated, sector-specific training pathways** address the feedback loop between unclear credentials, low student demand and limited curriculum investment by training institutions, improving the visibility and legitimacy of non-profit housing as a career field.
- **Regional, mobile and shift-friendly training delivery** counters the cycle in which staffing shortages and workload pressures restrict access to professional development, which in turn increases burnout and turnover risk.
- **Shared onboarding and foundational training resources** help reduce reliance on informal learning and ease pressure on individual organizations, enabling more consistent skill development despite staffing constraints.
- **Clear career pathways linking training to advancement and compensation** strengthen incentives for workers to participate in professional development and for employers to invest in paid training, helping to reverse cycles of under-investment and workforce instability.
- **Strategic partnerships with training institutions and Indigenous-led providers** create structured channels for ongoing sector input, breaking the cycle in which weak signaling and low enrollment discourage curriculum development.

These levers each address multiple, interconnected workforce challenges simultaneously. Taken together, these levers help move the sector from a fragmented, reactive workforce environment toward a more intentional, coordinated and resilient workforce system. Rather than responding to symptoms such as turnover and staff shortages, sector-led strategies focus on changing the underlying structures that shape workforce behaviour over time.

Strategic Plan for Implementation of BCNPHA-Supported Sector-Driven Solutions

The following strategic plan outlines the set of labour market initiatives that BCNPHA is well positioned to lead, in support of the non-profit housing sector. While the broader study identified a wide range of sector-driven solutions, this section focuses on actions that align with BCNPHA's mandate and role in strengthening access to relevant training and improving recruitment. These proposed activities represent what is possible for BCNPHA to undertake pending successful acquisition of project funding, rather than confirmed commitments.

To guide planning and resource considerations, the workplan organizes BCNPHA's prospective initiatives into short-, medium- and long-term opportunities based on the level of effort and complexity required.

Strategic Goal

Build a skilled, supported and sustainable workforce for B.C.'s non-profit housing sector by strengthening training pathways, improving recruitment and retention

Strategic Pillars



Pillar 1 — Strengthen sector identity and awareness: Strengthening identity builds public awareness of housing careers and improves recruitment and retention.



Pillar 2 — Create clear pathways into sector careers: The sector needs intentional, visible ways for people to enter non-profit housing work.



Pillar 3 — Expand access to training and professional development: Workers need equitable, accessible, culturally safe and relevant training that supports both frontline and technical roles.



Pillar 4 — Improve recruitment and retention conditions: Retention requires mental-health supports, leadership development and consistent, sector-wide HR practices.



Pillar 5 — Support equity and regional realities: Acknowledging the distinct realities of Indigenous-led housing providers and rural/remote organizations is essential for workforce sustainability.

and supporting the diverse needs of staff and providers across the province.

Pillars	Short Term (1–3 yrs)	Medium Term (4–7 yrs)	Long Term (8–10 yrs)
Pillar 1: Strengthen Sector Identity and Awareness	• Communities of practice to build shared understanding • Cohort-based training models • Frontline-specific training stream	• Sector identity framework (shared competencies and roles) • Cross-sector learning and collaboration	• Sector-wide accreditation to standardize workforce expectation
Pillar 2: Create Clear Pathways into Sector Careers	• Micro-credentials and sector-specific training pathways • Sector-wide onboarding program • Co-op/student placement guides and volunteer stream • Experiential learning partnerships with post-secondary institutions	• Identify opportunities for apprenticeships so prospective workers can earn-while-they learn, reducing barriers to accessing formal education • Scaled public awareness and recruitment campaigns	• Sector-wide certification for staff • Accreditation system for housing societies
Pillar 3: Expand Training Access and Professional Development	• Mental-health and debriefing resources • Regional pop-up training (e.g., "BCNPHA's Regional Education and Networking Events On Tour") • HR tools recognizing lived-experience	• Leadership pathways and supervisor development • Partnerships with specialized service providers	• Integrated training ecosystem tied to certification
Pillar 4: Improve Recruitment and Retention Conditions	• Consistent recruitment templates and inclusive hiring tools • Sector-wide onboarding and early career supports	• Pooled recruitment campaigns • Leadership development and succession planning	• Support the sector with shared tools, guidance and examples that enable organizations to strengthen and align career pathways
Pillar 5: Support Equity, Indigenous-Led Providers and Regional Realities	• Partnerships to develop and deliver Indigenous-led training; support Indigenous-led training • Trauma-informed and culturally safe training • Low-bandwidth and regional training options • Rural and remote committee to advise on sector-specific training needs outside urban centres	• Adapt training and recruitment practices using frontline input • In-person regional access to sector-specific training	• Accreditation criteria embedding equity and cultural safety

High-Level Initiatives by Time Period

Strategic Outcomes

- Clear, visible pathways into non-profit housing careers
- Develop talent pools with sector-specific skills across all regions
- Relevant, accessible and culturally safe training system
- Improved retention through leadership development and mental-health supports
- A unified sector identity that strengthens public understanding of housing careers
- Greater support for Indigenous-led and rural/remote organizations
- A maturing system that leads toward certification and accreditation



Conclusion

This study provides the most comprehensive, B.C.-specific examination to date of the workforce challenges facing the non-profit housing sector's operational workforce. By documenting experiences across regions, roles, housing types and organizational sizes, the research establishes a shared evidence base that validates long-standing workforce pressures and clarifies where challenges are systemic rather than isolated. In a sector with limited administrative data, this study marks an important step toward a more coordinated and strategic approach to workforce development.

The findings highlight that recruitment, training and retention challenges are deeply interconnected, shaped by factors such as unclear entry pathways, limited access to sector-specific training, burnout and workload intensity and inequities and distinct experiences faced by frontline workers, Indigenous staff, rural and remote providers, newcomers and people with lived-experience. The study confirms that these challenges cannot be effectively addressed by individual organizations alone. Coordinated, sector-led action is required to address the reinforcing systems that are impacting the sector's ability to recruit and retain skilled staff.

Moving Forward

The strategic plan outlined in this report provides a framework for advancing sector-driven solutions over the short, medium and long-term. The next phase of work will focus on translating these priorities into actionable initiatives. Key next steps include:

- **Costing priority sector-driven solutions** to better understand the level of investment required and to support informed decision-making by funders, partners and the sector.
- **Identifying and pursuing funding opportunities** to support implementation, including opportunities to align with provincial and federal workforce development, skills training, Indigenous-led training, rural and regional development and professional development funding programs.
- **Piloting and scaling priority initiatives**, such as sector-specific training

and micro-credentials, regional and mobile training delivery, centralized onboarding and orientation supports and communities of practice for frontline staff and leaders.

- **Strengthening partnerships with post-secondary institutions, Indigenous-led training organizations and sector partners** to better align training programs and curriculum with the realities of non-profit housing operations and workforce needs.

Why This Matters

The value of this study lies not only in identifying challenges, but in creating a shared understanding that enables collective action. By systematically documenting workforce realities that have long been described informally or anecdotally, the study supports a unified narrative about the skills, training and supports needed to operate and sustain non-profit housing across British Columbia. This evidence will help the sector move from reactive, short-term responses toward a more intentional workforce development strategy, one that supports clearer pathways into housing careers, improves access to relevant and culturally safe training, strengthens recruitment and retention and ultimately contributes to more stable housing and better outcomes for communities.

This report is intended to serve as a foundation for continued collaboration, learning and investment. As the sector moves into the next phase of implementation, the findings and strategic framework presented here will guide efforts to build a skilled, supported and resilient non-profit housing workforce for the future.

Appendix 1: Case Studies of Sector-Driven Solutions in Other Jurisdictions

The following case studies were informed through expert interviews conducted as part of this study. These case studies are included to explore specific examples of how other jurisdictions and sectors have approached similar workforce challenges. They are not presented as models to be adopted directly, but rather as learning tools that highlight strategies, structures and implementation approaches that may inform solutions for B.C.'s non-profit housing sector.

Case Study #1: Maternity Leave Resource Pooling

Jurisdiction: Ontario
Description: Pooled Resources
Sector: Non-Profit

Background: The Ontario Non-Profit Network (ONN) launched a decent work[2] movement in 2015 which has resulted in resources for non-profit organizations in Ontario to adopt decent work policies and practices. These resources have included a checklist for workplace practices to support decent work as well as the launch of a sector-wide pension plan recommended by the ONN. The pension plan is provided by OPTrust Select and is a defined benefit pension. Throughout the movement for decent work, ONN identified that the lack of available income replacement, or "top up", for maternity leave in the non-profit sector is a leading reason for losing workers in the sector. The non-profit sector workforce is particularly affected by the lack of available salary top up because of the high number of women that work in the sector and the competition with the public sector.

Description: With funding from the Community Foundations of Canada Investment Readiness Program, ONN hired a consultant to explore the possibility of creating a pooled maternity leave program for the non-profit sector. ONN also determined that there were no existing examples of pooled maternity leave programs in Canada. A pooled approach could decrease both risk and cost to individual organizations in increase the ability for small organizations to provide a salary top up for maternity leave. ONN also wanted to explore the possibility of providing income replacement for workers who would not qualify for the standard 55% EI for maternity leave.

Outcomes: The consultation determined that it would be possible to provide a up to 30% income replacement (which would mean 85% of income for those who qualify for the standard 55% EI) for one year and could cover all new parents of all genders in the sector (Ontario Non-Profit Network, 2021). The program would require a certain number of organizations to participate and contribute 1% of their monthly payroll budget to sustain the program in addition to seed funding. The consultation also determined the program would not be considered an insurance product and, therefore, would not function under insurance legislation, making the program administratively simpler to operate. ONN found that the key challenge is identifying funders to provide the initial seed funding to start the fund as well as acquiring funding to complete a Request for Proposal process to hire an investment fund to house the program and an administrator to run the program on behalf of the sector. Currently, ONN is asking members to express their interest in becoming an early adopter of the program to ensure buy-in from the sector, as well as exploring funding options.

Feasibility in the B.C. Context: Moderate - While a pooled parental leave top-up program is administratively and culturally feasible in B.C., its implementation would require careful design, sufficient employer participation and

2. The International Labour Organization popularized decent work to describe work that is productive and provides a fair income, security, protection and equal opportunity for all workers (International Labour Organization, n.d.).

external seed funding. Financial constraints among small and mid-sized housing providers and the need for start-up capital present key challenges. As a result, the approach is best suited to a phased or pilot implementation, potentially integrated with other shared benefits and framed as a longer-term, sector-led retention initiative rather than an immediate solution.

Case Study #2: New South Wales Cadetship Program

Jurisdiction: Australia
Description: Cadetship
Sector: Non-Profit Housing

Background: The Community Housing Industry Association of New South Wales offers a cadetship program with funding with the state government for 25 placements a year. The cadetship program pairs community housing specific training with a work placement with a local community housing provider. The eligibility for the cadetship program targets unemployed youth, youth and adults living in community housing, people who are Aboriginal and/or Torres Straight Islander, people with disabilities and refuges and migrants. For those living in community housing, their work placement is most often with another community housing provider to avoid conflicts and privacy concerns.

Description: Participants in the cadetship program will receive a 12-month paid contract with a local community housing provider and be enrolled in a nationally accredited qualification, Certificate IV in Housing. The training for the qualification takes place during work hours and participants have access to a mentor and a workplace coordinator to support them during the placement. At the beginning of the program, participants receive wrap around supports and then are supported to work independently as their contract progresses. The program also created a Frist Nations Mentorship Program to support Aboriginal and/or Torres Straight Islander participants throughout the program and ensure participants felt culturally safe (Community Housing Industry Association NSW, 2024).

The state government provides a subsidy of $63,767.47 AUD per cadet to cover all costs including wages and training. Minimum pay rates in community housing in Australia are set out under the Social Community, Home Care and Disability Services Industry Awards (SCHADS Award). For the cadetship program, participants are paid a minimum rate of a Level 1 employee under SCHADS, which is $26.30 AUD. Interview participants noted that this is a relatively low wage given the cost of living in Australia.

Outcomes: In the 2023-24 cadetship program, 78% of participants obtained their Certificate IV in Housing and 72% secured employment after their 12-month contract. 40% of participants identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Straight Islander (Community Housing Industry Association NSW, 2024

Feasibility in the B.C. Context: Challenging - A cadetship model similar to New South Wales is potentially feasible in B.C., particularly as a targeted workforce-entry and retention strategy for non-profit housing. The approach aligns well with B.C. priorities around creating clearer pathways into the sector for youth, people with lived-experience, Indigenous peoples, newcomers and people facing barriers to employment.

However, feasibility in B.C. would be highly dependent on sustained government funding or subsidies, as there is limited capacity to fully fund wages, training and coordination costs through a sector-led initiative. Implementation would also require strong partnerships between government, training institutions, Indigenous-led organizations and housing providers. B.C. also lacks an existing accredited housing qualification similar to that in Australia. As such, implementation of a similar program in B.C. would require significant coordination among multiple interest holders.

Case Study #3: Fringe Benefit Tax Rebate

Jurisdiction: Australia
Description: Tax Rebate
Sector: Non-Profit Sector

Background: In Australia it was a common practice for companies to offer coverage for their employees' expenses, such as partial rent or a child's tuition as a way of providing a tax-free benefit in addition to salary, referred to as "fringe benefits". In the 1980s, the federal government started to tax the value of this type of benefit. It was recognized that the Fringe Benefit Tax (FBT) had an

especially negative effect on the non-profit sector, given historically non-competitive salaries. As a solution, the federal government created the FBT Rebate program for eligible non-profit organizations.

Description: The FBT rebate program allows employees of non-profits to "salary sacrifice" which allows them to dedicate a portion of their monthly income to pay agreed upon eligible expenses (Mach, 2024). The employer will pay the agreed upon expenses directly to the payee on behalf of their employee. The amount an employee chooses to sacrifice is reduced from their taxable income; therefore, increasing their take home income each year. Eligible expenses include:

- Mortgage or rent
- Personal loan repayments
- Credit card payments
- Utility bills (electricity, gas, water)
- Groceries
- Fuel and vehicle maintenance
- Insurance premiums (health, car, home, etc.)
- School fees and childcare costs
- Medical expenses
- Work-related equipment (laptops, mobile phones, etc.)
- Professional memberships and subscriptions

The amount an employee is allowed to salary sacrifice each year is capped at $15,900 and an additional $2,650 for meal and entertainment expenses. Additionally, workers living in remote areas are also able to include vehicle fuel for personal use and cost of travel to and from a remote area for holidays. The FBT rebate program can increase an individual's take home income by approximately $7,000 per year.

Outcomes: Interview participants noted that the FBT rebate program has been widely adopted in the non-profit sector and the majority of staff opt-in for the salary sacrifice. Participants reported that the program is administratively easy. However, participants did not believe the rebate program works well as a recruitment tool for the non-profit sector. Some shared that the eligible expenses are most useful for mid-career employees, as many younger or older workers in the sector do not have eligible expenses (e.g. they do not have a mortgage or pay rent as they still live with their parents or they have paid off their mortgage) and will therefore not have access to the benefit. Participants also shared that the rebate program does not increase income enough to be competitive with the public and private sector. Lastly, participants described that the rebate program is not well understood by people outside the sector and it is not widely considered by many while seeking employment.

Feasibility in the B.C. Context: Challenging - A fringe-benefit or salary-sacrifice model similar to Australia's FBT rebate program is not directly transferable to B.C., as it relies on federal tax mechanisms that do not exist in Canada. Canadian non-profits do not have an equivalent tax framework that would allow employees to reduce taxable income through employer-paid personal expenses in the same way. As a result, an exact replication of the model is not feasible in the B.C. context.

However, the case study is informative in illustrating how tax-based benefits can supplement wages in sectors with limited compensation flexibility. While a comparable program would require federal tax policy changes beyond the sector's control, the underlying principle may have relevance for B.C. when considering alternative retention supports. Any comparable approach in B.C. would depend on national tax policy instruments or the expansion of existing benefit mechanisms rather than sector-led implementation alone.

Case Study #4: Community Services Micro-credentials

Jurisdiction: Manitoba
Description: Micro-Credentials
Sector: Homelessness, Anti-violence

Background: The Manitoba Association of Women's Shelters (MAWS) found that many new employees were unprepared coming into the anti-violence or homelessness sector and were not well-informed on what to expect in frontline work in a shelter. This was a leading cause of staff turnover in the sector. In order to better prepare staff, MAWS partnered with Red River College Polytechnic to provide an online micro-

credential course for shelter support workers. The Shelter Support Worker micro-credential was created for those who are new to the sector or are interested in working in the sector.

Description: The micro-credential is available for two cohorts of 30 participants, twice a year. While most participants are already working in the sector, there is a large portion of those who are interested in the sector. For those who are not already working in the sector, the micro-credential course is partnered with an apprenticeship program wherein participants are placed in a local shelter near the end of the course.

The program is a 6-month commitment and offers two specializations: homelessness and family violence. Each participant completes a 90-hour foundations training before selecting their specialization. The course is tuition-free for residents of Manitoba and is funded through a partnership with the Province of Manitoba and the federal government.

Outcomes: Most program participants who do not complete the program drop out early in the course and are likely to complete the course once they make it to the work placement. The course is successfully promoted using social media and MAWS has received interest in the program from across Canada, including organizations that would like to create a similar program for rural and remote shelter workers. When doing research prior to initiating the program, MAWS was unable to find a comparable opportunity for shelter workers in other provinces.

Feasibility in the B.C. Context: Strong - This approach is highly feasible in B.C. given existing post-secondary infrastructure, established partnerships between non-profit organizations and training providers and prior provincial investment in micro-credentials and short-term skills training. The model aligns well with identified sector needs for accessible, low-cost and sector-specific training, particularly for frontline and early-career workers. Models for tuition-free or publicly subsidized micro-credentials through colleges and community-based partners already exist in B.C., making the administrative and delivery requirements relatively low-risk and adaptable to regional and sectoral contexts as well as achievable through sector-led initiatives.

Case Study #5: Competence and Conduct Standard

Jurisdiction: UK
Description: Mandatory Accreditation
Sector: Community Housing

Background: In 2023, the UK government introduced the Social Housing (Regulation) Act with the goal of improving regulation of social housing in the UK. The Act was in direct response to an inquiry into a fire in a 24-storey social housing building which resulted in the deaths of 72 residents (Gov UK, 2025). The inquiry found that the severity of the fire was partially caused by a lack of appropriate staff training and staff disregarding residents' concerns about living conditions. The inquiry also found that these issues were a national trend in social housing provision. As such, the government introduced new legislation to improve living conditions in social housing.

Description: In part, this legislation included the Competence and Conduct Standard, which requires senior housing managers and executives to hold an appropriate housing management qualification, such as a level 4 or 5 management qualification from CIH (Gov UK, 2025). This is the only example of mandatory accreditation in the housing sector that this environmental scan identified.

The Competence and Conducts Standards also requires social housing providers ensure all staff has necessary skills, knowledge and experience to provide good quality services, have a written policy detailing their approach to learning and development, appraising staff and managing poor performance, give tenants the opportunity to influence policy and more, only senior level staff is required to attain accreditation. This was criticized by interview participants, who felt that the legislation missed the level of staff that would benefit from accreditation. Interview participants suggested that frontline staff such as housing officers would benefit from accreditation as they are directly involved with tenant relations, whereas the content covered in the level 4 and 5 qualifications through CIH is not particularly relevant to the work done by senior management and executives. Directing the training at senior staff is a potential waste of limited resources in the sector. Interview participants also expressed concern that some staff may choose to leave the sector if they have to pay out-of-pocket for the accreditation.

Outcomes: Interview participants also reported that the UK government was not providing funding to support the required training or scaling up of available training providers as there would be an increased demand for existing providers. In September of 2025 the government provided further guidance on the introduction of the standard, which announced the standard will come into force in October of 2026 and will allow for a three-year transition period for large housing providers and a four-year transition period for small housing providers to ensure that all necessary staff has attained accreditation. Interview participants shared that while there is no disagreement in the sector about the need for improvements related to the quality of social housing across the country, providers are unsure at this point if the new regulations will have a positive impact.

Feasibility in the B.C. Context: Challenging - A mandatory accreditation model similar to the UK's Competence and Conduct Standard would be challenging to implement in B.C.. The approach would require legislative or regulatory authority, sustained public funding and significant expansion of sector-specific training capacity, none of which currently exist within B.C.'s non-profit housing context. Introducing mandatory credentials without dedicated funding could increase turnover risk. In addition, the case study suggests that government-led mandatory accreditation may not be an efficient approach in the non-profit housing sector.

While the case study underscores the importance of strengthening training standards and accountability, a compulsory accreditation framework is unlikely to be feasible or appropriate in B.C. in the near term. However, a voluntary, phased, or sector-led approach to professional standards and credentials would better reflect the needs of the sector.

Appendix 2: Data Collection Activities

This level of consultation was necessary because the non-profit housing sector does not operate as a single, uniform workforce and its workforce challenges cannot be accurately understood through centralized data or a limited set of perspectives. Workforce experiences, skill requirements, risks and access to training vary significantly by role, geography, organization size and housing type. In the absence of a comprehensive administrative dataset that captures these differences, broad and inclusive consultations were essential to surface realities that are otherwise invisible, including frontline workload pressures, regional access barriers to training and the distinct challenges faced by Indigenous-led and rural or remote providers.

This study required a level of investment commensurate with the **breadth, complexity and fragmentation of B.C.'s non-profit housing sector workforce**. Resources were dedicated not only to analysis, but to designing and delivering a multi-method research approach that could credibly capture workforce conditions across regions, housing types, roles and organizational contexts in the absence of a single reliable data source. This included developing and administering a sector-wide employee survey, convening regionally distributed in-person and virtual consultations, engaging participants at existing sector events, synthesizing extensive literature and secondary data and iterating findings through validation and prioritization processes with sector stakeholders. Together, these activities ensured that the findings reflect lived operational realities across the province and provide a durable evidence base to inform subsequent planning, investment and implementation efforts.

Of note, the consultation activities described below were intentionally designed to be highly participatory and engaging, recognizing that sector staff bring critical expertise grounded in day-to-day housing operations. Beyond information gathering, sessions were structured to encourage dialogue, peer exchange and collective reflection, allowing participants to test ideas, compare experiences across regions and housing models and surface practical solutions together. Wherever possible, consultations were framed as shared learning opportunities, with participants gaining insight into emerging sector-wide trends, effective practices and common challenges beyond their own organizations. This approach supported not only richer and more nuanced findings for the study, but also immediate value for participants, who were able to take information, perspectives and connections back to their organizations and communities.

Data was collected through the following activities:

- **In-person focus groups** held at BCNPHA's 2025 Regional Education and Networking Tradeshow events (4 regional focus groups).
  In person focus groups also took place at two other sector learning events: the Aboriginal Housing Management Association's 2025 Spring Gathering and the B.C. Society for Transition Houses 2025 Training Forum. These sessions used facilitated discussion stations to explore workforce pathways, challenges and potential solutions. These focus groups were attended by over 90 participants from housing societies in B.C., including executives, board members, managers, frontline staff, human resources personnel. Participating housing societies ranged in portfolio size, number of staff, types of housing and services offered and included Indigenous-led and rural and remote housing providers.
  An additional in-person focus group was conducted with participants at the Continuing Education and Training Association (CETA) of B.C.'s 2025 gathering. Over 40 participants discussed the types of training programs available that are relevant to B.C.'s non-profit housing sector, as well as challenges and opportunities for providing more sector-specific training.
  Participants in the focus groups from housing societies and non-profit housing organizations providing services in the sector were offered a $100 honorarium per participant, up to 2 per organization. These participants were also invited to fill in a follow-up survey online to help quantify what we heard during the focus groups and organizations that participated.

- **Virtual focus groups** designed to increase accessibility for participants, as well as theme-based topics in the Fall of 2025. These focus groups included one for housing society staff who could not attend the in-person focus groups, one specifically for rural and remote housing societies and one with training providers that offer or could offer relevant training for the sector's workforce. The Aboriginal Housing Management Association also organized a virtual focus group specifically for Indigenous-led providers to support this study. Approximately 20 people participated in the virtual focus groups. Participants in the virtual focus groups for housing societies went through the same discussion stations as the in-person focus groups. The virtual focus group with training providers followed the same discussion guide as the in-person event done at CETA.

  Participants in the virtual focus groups from housing societies and non-profit housing organizations providing services in the sector were offered a $100 honorarium per participant, up to 2 per organization. These participants were also invited to fill in a follow-up survey online to help quantify what we heard during the focus groups and organizations that participated.

- **A literature review and environmental scan** conducted to complement the primary data collection and to situate the study findings within broader training opportunities and workforce development research. The literature review examined a range of sources, including Canadian and international non-profit housing organizations, post-secondary institutions, municipalities, as well as industry reports, policy papers, articles and blog posts. Topics explored included workforce development, recruitment and retention challenges and training and skills gaps affecting the non-profit housing sector. The environmental scan included a review of existing training programs in B.C. and relevant programs in other Canadian provinces and territories. Together, the literature review and environmental scan provided contextual evidence to validate themes and solutions emerging from focus groups, interviews and surveys. The literature review can be found here: (HYPERLINK)

- **Key informant interviews** with sector leaders and external experts to gather comparative insights and lessons from other jurisdictions. Areas of focus and expertise were selected based on key questions identified through the focus groups and literature review. Academic and grey literature were reviewed to identify potential jurisdictions and organizations to include for recruitment. A total of 10 structured interviews were conducted virtually with representatives from the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Manitoba, Alberta, Ontario and national organizations. These interviews informed 5 case studies which explore examples of specific recruitment and retention programs in other jurisdictions.

- **Quantitative surveys** of employees in the sector, as well as of housing societies that participated in the focus groups, to collect data on vacancies, recruitment timelines, training access and retention trends. The survey was structured into four main sections. The first section collected demographic and employment-related information, capturing both the characteristics and broader organizational context of workers. The second section explored respondents' career pathways, including their past employment and education, current roles and responsibilities and aspirations for future career development. The third section focused on identifying current skills gaps and training needs across the workforce. The final section examined issues related to recruitment and retention, including job satisfaction and perceptions of workplace well-being. Over 350 employees participated in the employee survey and 25 housing societies participated in the focus group follow up survey.

- **Prioritization session** where participants provided feedback and/or reviewed and ranked solutions based on perceived impact and feasibility. A total of 18 sector leaders, trainers and non-profit staff participated in virtual and in-person facilitated sessions. Participants were asked to review identified challenges and corresponding solutions, organize solutions on an impact/effort matrix, prioritize solutions and discuss implementation for key solutions.

To maximize participation across a range of interest holders who may face barriers to participation, the study design deliberately pursued multiple outreach and engagement strategies. These included consultations at existing sector learning and networking.

Appendix 3: Mapping Solutions to Challenges

With challenges overlapping and reinforcing each other, many of the sector-specific solutions address more than one challenge at a time, showing that a small number of levers can result in impactful shifts towards the desired state for the sector's workforce.

Solution	Sector Identity	Pathways	Training Access	Recruiting	Prof. Dev.	Retention	Distinct Experiences
Collaborate with training institutions to create sector-specific micro-credentials	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Create experiential learning opportunities for students in formal training institutions	X	X	X	X		X	X
Create guide for housing societies to take on co-op students		X	X	X			X
Create HR resources to recognize experience of people with lived-experience		X	X	X			X
Create opportunities for more in-person sector-specific training around the province					X	X	X

Table continues on next page

Solution	Sector Identity	Pathways	Training Access	Recruiting	Prof. Dev.	Retention	Distinct Experiences
Create opportunities to hear from other sectors for new ideas to inform our sector's work	X				X	X	
Create sector-specific certification process for staff	X	X	X	X	X		
Create sector-specific training programs and resources to support staff mental health				X	X	X	X
Create sector-wide recruitment templates to streamline recruitment processes for individual housing societies	X			X			X
Create volunteer stream for students at HCC and other sector training events	X	X	X	X			
Develop communities of practice	X				X	X	X
Implement sector-specific accreditation for housing societies	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Increase public awareness of the work done by Indigenous-housing societies and community impacts of this work	X				X	X	X

Table continues on next page

Solution	Sector Identity	Pathways	Training Access	Recruiting	Prof. Dev.	Retention	Distinct Experiences
Launch public awareness campaign on behalf of sector	X	X	X	X			
Offer centralized training for new staff (on-boarding supports)	X	X	X	X		X	
Offer frontline-specific training stream			X	X	X	X	X
Promote jobs in sector	X	X	X	X			
Promote leadership from within sector to facilitate and incentivize career growth				X	X	X	X
Provide training for people with lived-experience while working in sector		X	X	X	X	X	X
Set up partnerships with specialized service providers to offer expanded supports for tenants to multiple housing societies across regions	X	X	X	X			X

Table continues on next page

Solution	Sector Identity	Pathways	Training Access	Recruiting	Prof. Dev.	Retention	Distinct Experiences
Student research topics: • Employee housing models • Models for improving hands-on training such as maintenance in rural/remote areas • Create guide of sector-specific training opportunities • Conduct cross-sector research on models for incentivizing skilled workers to take/stay in jobs in rural/remote areas	X	X	X	X			X
Use cohort training models for shared learning and networking across organizations			X		X	X	X

Appendix 4: Characteristics of B.C. Workers 2024

Gender	%
Age Groups	
15-29 years	24.3%
30-44 years	35.7%
45-59 years	27.6%
60+ years	12.4%
Education (single select)	
0 to 8 years	0.6%
Above bachelor's degree	13.5%
Bachelor's degree	26.3%
High school graduate	17.2%
Post-secondary certificate or diploma	30.7%
Some high school	4.4%
Some postsecondary	7.2%
Newcomers	
Immigrant, landed 10 or less years earlier	10.6%
Immigrant, landed more than 10 years earlier	22.5%
Non-immigrant	66.9%

Gender	%
Job Type	
Full-time	80.1%
Part-time	19.9%
# of Jobs	
Multiple jobholder	6.8%
Single jobholder, including job changers	93.2%
Reasons for Leaving Jobs (single select)	
Job leavers, going to school	17.8%
Job leavers, other reasons	26.2%
Job leavers, own illness or disability	6.1%
Job leavers, personal or family responsibilities	6.4%
Job leavers, retired	12.8%
Job losers, laid off	43.8%
Indigenous Identity	100.0%
Non-Indigenous people	96.1%
Indigenous people	3.9%

Source: Prepared by Social Research and Demonstration Corporation using various sources - 1) the Satellite Account of Non-profit Institution and Volunteering data, 2) the Labour Force Survey (LFS) public use microdata files (PUMF) and 3) the Workforce Profile Dashboard on B.C. Public Services statistics.

Appendix 5: Sector Workforce Characteristics by Region

	Lower Mainland	Interior	Vancouver Island	Northern B.C.
Age				
18-34	19%	9%	17%	
35-44	22%	24%	22%	
45-54	26%	25%	20%	32%
55 or above	33%	42%	42%	42%
Lived-experience				
Have Lived-Experience	35%	37%	39%	60%
No Live-Experience	65%	64%	61%	40%
Immigrant status				
Born in Canada	66%	89%	87%	
Born in another country	34%	11%	13%	
Indigenous identity				
Yes	8%	10%	19%	23%
No	92%	91%	81%	77%
Education: Bachelor degree or higher				
No Bachelor degree	43%	68%	49%	
Bachelor degree or higher	57%	32%	51%	
Income				
<70k	48%	55%	46%	58%
70k-99,999	27%	30%	32%	19%
100k+	26%	15%	23%	23%
Community size				
Large urban (100,000+ people)	82%	21%	45%	
Medium urban (30,000-99,999 people)	11%	32%	35%	
Small/Rural areas (under 30,000 people)	7%	48%	20%	58%
Number of employees				
Less than 20	28%	42%	13%	30%
20-49	18%	31%	23%	39%
50 or more	54%	27%	65%	30%
Indigenous-led				
Yes	5%	11%	25%	28%
No	95%	89%	75%	72%

Appendix 6: From Findings to Practice – Workforce Resources for Non-Profit Housing Providers

Purpose of These Documents

This set of handouts was developed to support individual non-profit housing societies in understanding and responding to workforce challenges identified through the Labour Market Challenges and Solutions Study. The documents translate study findings into practical, employer-relevant insights related to recruitment, retention, training access, burnout and workforce sustainability.

Together, the handouts provide a shared evidence-based reference that housing societies can use to reflect on their own workforce context, recognizing that organizations differ widely in size, region, mandate and capacity.

How These Documents Can Be Used

Housing societies are encouraged to use these materials as starting points for discussion and inquiry to consider how broad sector trends may (or may not) be showing up locally and how those trends interact with existing organizational priorities. Used this way, the handouts can help strengthen alignment between evidence, planning and conversation across the sector, while respecting the diversity of housing societies and the realities they operate within.

Housing societies may find these resources useful in several ways, including:

- **Contextualizing local experience** by comparing organizational staffing realities with sector-wide workforce trends.
- **Supporting internal conversations** among leadership, boards, managers and staff about recruitment pressures, retention risks and training needs.
- **Informing planning discussions** related to onboarding, succession, professional development and supervision.
- **Framing external conversations** with funders, training institutions, partners, or sector collaborators using shared evidence rather than anecdote.
- **Identifying which issues are most relevant locally**, recognizing that not all workforce challenges affect all organizations in the same way.

Scope of These Resources

The handouts are designed to be used individually or together, depending on the needs of the organization and the nature of the conversation.

These documents focus on employer-level considerations that emerged from the study, including:

- recruitment and retention dynamics,
- access to and delivery of professional development,
- staff burnout and wellbeing and
- workforce sustainability over time.

They reflect sector-wide patterns and reported experiences, not assessments of individual organizations. The intent is to support reflection, planning and learning—not to evaluate performance.

These handouts are **not**:

- a set of prescriptive recommendations or required actions;
- a checklist or best-practices guide;
- a one-size-fits-all solution to workforce challenges; or
- a substitute for organization-specific planning and decision-making.

Workforce issues within the non-profit housing sector are shaped by many factors, including funding, regional labour markets, organizational structure and community context. These resources are meant to **inform and support**, not dictate responses.

BC Non-Profit Housing Association

Practice-Informed Recruitment and Retention Strategies

This handout summarizes recruitment and retention strategies that non-profit housing providers and staff reported as effective in their organizations, along with approaches reflected in the supporting literature. These strategies are not best practices nor universally applicable. They are intended as a practical reference that housing societies can adapt based on their size, capacity, location, workforce composition and operational context.

Recruitment Strategies

Creating Awareness

- Create a one-page "day-in-the-life" handout to illustrate the realities of the job for candidates
- Create simple career pathway maps showing how staff can grow within the organization or sector
- Engage youth, students and new graduates through school partnerships, volunteer or shadow opportunities, co-ops, practicums, case competitions and student research collaborations
- Share job postings with post-secondary program coordinators across relevant disciplines (e.g., trades, social services, accounting, HR, building services)
- Use values-based hiring language to attract mission-aligned candidates

Creating Entry Pathways

- Reducing barriers to entry and supporting learning on the job
- Reduce unnecessary training barriers by clearly separating essential and preferred requirements
- Offer on-the-job training where feasible, rather than requiring specific training of applicants
- Cover required pre-employment checks (eg, CRC/VSS) to reduce financial barriers
- Adopt inclusive hiring practices that value transferable skills, values alignment and community knowledge
- Review and adjust recruitment practices and on-the-job training to ensure they are culturally safe
- Partner with other organizations to share service provision for tenants, where appropriate, to reduce recruitment pressures for specialized roles

Hiring Practices and Fit Assessment

- Giving both candidates and employers ways to assess alignment, reduce mismatch and make roles workable in a tight labour market
- Offer optional paid shadow shifts to reduce mismatches between candidate expectations and job realities
- Use fit-focused hiring tools such as values-based interviews, shadow shifts and practicum placements as recruitment pathways
- Explore AI tools to support early screening for role alignment, where appropriate and aligned with organizational capacity
- Offer flexible pay–time trade-offs where possible
- Create referral incentives for existing staff
- Offer pay aligned with a living wage
- For rural and remote recruitment, offer relocation supports, temporary housing solutions, community welcome support and local apprenticeship partnerships

Early Onboarding and Supports

- Provide structured mentorship or buddy systems for new staff, pairing them with experienced colleagues to support learning, confidence and problem-solving in real work contexts
- Offer cross-training opportunities so new staff understand different roles, functions and pressures within the organization, particularly in smaller or rural organizations where staff wear many hats
- Support access to sector-specific training early in employment (e.g., trauma-informed practice, harm reduction, housing systems and sector norms)
- Create opportunities for cohort-based or peer learning (within or across organizations), especially role-based learning that reduces isolation and supports knowledge sharing
- Make career pathways and growth options visible early, even where advancement is gradual, so new staff can see how skills, training and experience connect to future roles in the sector
- Ensure fair and transparent scheduling policies so new frontline staff are not consistently assigned the least desirable or highest-intensity shifts, particularly during their early tenure

Retention Strategies

Leadership & Supervision Practices

- Invest in leadership and supervision training focused on coaching, trauma-informed supervision, feedback and conflict resolution Offer trauma-informed service delivery training for management
- Embrace people's passion for working in the sector by letting them lead projects that matter to them
- Implement exit interviews, or pulse surveys to understand retention risks and adapt supports

Worklife Balance

- Align schedules with school calendars where possible
- Explore childcare partnerships or priority access agreements with local providers
- Offer birthdays off
- Offer flexible schedules so staff can attend to personal responsibilities (e.g. attending child's basketball game, or supporting family members with medical appointments)
- Consider 4-day work weeks options, flex time

Clear Career Growth

- Offer temporary assignments and leadership apprenticeships
- Offer pay increases to incentivize professional development when career progression is not available
- Offer program for employer-paid professional development, with participants committing to stay with the organization for a set period of time
- Bring training opportunities on-site for staff to reduce barriers to attendance
- Offer training opportunities for frontline staff in addition to leadership
- Offer additional professional development training opportunities corresponding to years of service
- Offer secondments during leaves to internal staff to develop skills and try out different roles within organization
- Consider movement between organizations within sector as reciprocal process, rather than poaching, to create opportunities for career growth while keeping staff in the sector

Emotional Labour, Safety & Supports

- Offer post-incident debriefs
- Create peer (role-based) support groups (may need to be same role across multiple organizations, especially for smaller organizations)
- Refresh training on safety planning, risk of violence and de-escalation regularly
- Provide staff with mental health supports
- Include wellness days as part of benefits package
- In rural and remote contexts, provide guidance on ethical boundaries, dual relationships and privacy in small communities

Culture of Staff Appreciation

- Celebrate team and staff successes
- Write thank you notes to staff
- Create a formal staff recognition program
- Form social committees to anchor culture through low-cost events and peer connection
- Host long-service awards accompanied by a small gift for long-term employees
- Host staff retreat days to show appreciation, promote wellness, make personal connections with other staff and develop a sense of belonging

BC Non-Profit Housing Association

Tips for Housing Societies to Support Professional Development

The following outlines practical strategies that housing societies can use to strengthen access to professional development and support ongoing learning across their organizations. These tips offer options that can help staff build skills, stay current in their roles and grow within the community housing sector.

Reduce Access Barriers

- Budget for backfill coverage while staff are at training
- Offer time during shifts to do modular or online training
- Create virtual role-based support networks for shared learning
- Offer employer-paid professional development
- Consider earn-while-learn model, where staff are hired and then do prerequisite training (paid)
- Coordinate with training programs to create sector-specific micro-credentials, which can be more accessible than certificates and degrees
- Micro-credentials, self-paced, modular and online training opportunities might help improve affordability and accessibility of professional development opportunities
- Backfill positions and offer secondments to people within the sector to learn and share ideas, without having to take time away from work for training
- Seek out Indigenous-led professional development training offerings
- Offer more on the job training opportunities rather than training requirements to apply
- Professional development training needs to have culturally safe and trauma-informed content

Cross-Department Learning

- Run department exchange days
- Pair long-term staff with new staff to provide mentorship
- Offer job shadowing across departments to reduce silos and improve collaboration

Rural/Remote Delivery Models

- Partner with other housing societies or service providers to organize mobile training pods that visit regions regularly with a set menu of in-person training offerings (e.g., safety, de-escalation, building systems)
- Partner with other organizations to offer role-based support networks for shared learning
- Consider train-the-trainer models, where some staff go for off-site training and bring that training back to share with the organization
- Explore virtual reality tools for remote but hands on maintenance training

Incentivize Professional Development

- Offer additional professional development training opportunities corresponding to years of service
- Ensure professional development is linked to career advancement opportunities, or if not possible, more pay
- Consider creating compulsory training on core set of training courses for staff (employer paid)
- Consider internal promotions when openings are available
- Professional development training needs to have culturally safe and trauma-informed content

Create a Culture of Learning

- Prioritize organizational learning (e.g., learning from mistakes and sharing information across departments)
- Do regular staff debriefs to learn from challenging situations
- Create communities of practice to learn from each other for all role types (within an organization or partner with other organizations to find role peers)
- Creating a training officer position, someone who helps staff connect to available training opportunities based on organizational and staff training needs
- Share success stories
- Participate in college community advisory committees to encourage sector-specific curriculum development
- Allow some staff time to teach at local training programs to create sector-specific training locally
- Offer training refreshers regularly to ensure training stays top of mind and is up-to-date
- Consider retention agreements to signal employer support for professional development

Common Training Needs

- Leadership training for management to ensure they are supporting staff well
- Coaching and feedback skills
- Listening skills
- Conflict resolution
- Frontline workers need specific skills training including:
- Harm reduction
- Dealing with aggressive behaviors
- CPR and First Aid
- Crisis intervention training
- Naloxone training
- Non-violent conflict de-escalation
- Trauma-informed service delivery
- Change management training to help staff navigate changes impacting their work and the sector
- Cultural-safety training
- Training for mental wellness and boundary setting
- Digital literacy
- Ongoing training for soft-skill refreshers (e.g. empathy, communications, etc.)

Emerging Training Needs

- Building maintenance for more high-tech energy efficient equipment
- How to make use of AI in the sector, in an appropriate way
- Doing building maintenance and upgrades with tenants in place to avoid displacement while maintaining and renewing aging buildings
- Alternative sources of capital

BC Non-Profit Housing Association

Info Sheet for Training Partners: Non-Profit Housing Sector Workforce Training Needs

This Info Sheet summarizes the key skills gaps identified across the non-profit housing sector throughout this study. Addressing these gaps requires sector-specific curricula, regional access and processes to reduce barriers and incentivize training. This information is intended to help organizations, training institutions and sector partners better understand where additional support or training is most needed. By using this overview, housing societies can more effectively plan professional development, improve communication with training providers, tailor training investments and strengthen capacity building across their teams.

Skills Needs

Soft Skills & Practice Competencies

- Psychological safety and vicarious-trauma awareness
- De-escalation, conflict resolution
- Boundary-setting and safety planning
- Empathy
- Relationship-building and communications (verbal, written, plain-language)
- Cultural humility

Operations and Casework

- Trauma-informed practice
- Cultural safety
- Eviction prevention within a rights-based, mission-driven frame (support before enforcement)
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Systems navigation: coordinating across health, social services, income assistance, immigration and justice
- Applications for AI
- Orientation to housing continuum and policy context of non-profit housing

Property Operations, Building Systems and Maintenance

- Building systems literacy (HVAC, hot water, access control, life-safety/alarms, solar/controls), particularly for high-tech equipment
- Preventative maintenance and maintenance triage
- Modern methods of construction
- Portfolio planning
- Property management software
- Tenant-centered property management
- Leadership, Supervision and People Management
- First-time supervisor skills for staff promoted from frontline roles (coaching, feedback, scheduling, delegation)
- Trauma-informed supervision and routine debrief protocols; clinical/peer supervision models
- Work design and workload management in 24/7 settings
- Supervision and leadership in high-stress environments

Delivery Format Considerations

- In-person where possible, but has barriers to participation
- Regional pop-up training (rotating around province)
- Virtual training, but with low bandwidth offerings
- Modular training
- Micro-credentials
- Communities of practice
- Cohort models
- Virtual reality to allow for remote hands-on training
- Training offered at different times of day to reflect 24/7 shift work in sector
- Frontline specific training streams
- On-the-job training/earn-as-you-learn models
- Training offerings with practicum/co-op placements
- Trauma-informed training formats, with embedded wellness supports
- Indigenous-led training
- PLAR
- Curriculum informed by advisory committees so reflects realities of work in sector and stays up-to-date

Regional Considerations

Northern, Rural and Remote Communities

Priority skills:

- Working in cross-functional roles
- Crisis response, safety in small communities
- Ethical practice and professional boundaries in small communities (dual relationships, confidentiality, conflicts of interest, privacy)
- Property and technology maintenance when there is limited access to specialized trades
- Independent decision-making and risk judgment (working with limited on-site supervision or specialist backup)
- Using AI in low bandwidth areas
- Burnout prevention in isolated or high-responsibility roles
- Development in rural and remote settings

Preferred formats:

- In-person, cohort-based, locally delivered or rotating regional training
- Modular training delivered in short blocks
- Hybrid options that do not depend on continuous high-speed internet
- Peer learning and role-based cohorts across organizations
- Remote coaching or technical support to supplement hands-on work (e.g., maintenance or operations support when trades are unavailable)
- Virtual, cross-organizational communities of practice
- Micro-credentials
- Access to standardized, sector-specific orientation and core training modules
- Local apprenticeships and practicum opportunities

Interior/Island and Smaller Urban Centres

Priority Skills:

- Supervising and supporting staff in small-to-mid sized organizations
- Managing emotional labour and burnout with limited internal HR supports
- Coordinating tenant support, operations and administration within lean teams
- Supporting staff career progression where advancement opportunities are limited
- Applying trauma-informed practice across a mix of housing types

Preferred formats:

- Regional, in-person training designed for same-day travel
- Hybrid delivery with limited but purposeful in-person sessions
- Cohort-based learning with peers from similarly sized organizations
- Short, applied sessions focused on specific roles or tasks
- Modular training that staff can complete overtime as coverage allows

Barriers to Training for Prospective and Current Staff in Sector

- Cost of training
- Lack of sector-wide training requirements
- Many people with lived-experience work in sector, but face barriers to accessing formal training
- Costs of covering shifts for staff during training
- Training not accessible during work time for staff reflecting sector's 24/7 shifts
- Personal responsibilities
- Operating around province, including rural and remote areas, making travel for training expensive and time consuming
- Lack of locally available training for those working in rural and remote areas
- Lack of trauma-informed and culturally safe training opportunities
- Lack of Indigenous-led training opportunities
- Funding does not include budgets for employer-paid training
- Limited career growth opportunities in sector's many smaller organizations, so less incentive to take on training
- Low pay that does not correspond to training levels
- Lack of sector-specific training
- Lack of clarity regarding what training will be useful in sector

BC Non-Profit Housing Association

Info Sheet for Housing Societies: Reducing Barriers to Professional Development

This reflection tool is designed to help housing societies examine how sector-wide barriers to professional development may be showing up within their own organizations and to support discussion about possible ways to address them.

Barrier	Reflection & Discussion Questions
Limited staff coverage for training	How often do staff miss training or choose not to sign up for training due to coverage challenges? Which roles are most affected? What options exist to adjust scheduling, stagger participation, or pilot alternative coverage models?
Part-time, multiple jobs, or non-standard shifts	Which staff groups are least able to participate in training? What relevant training offerings exist that are accessible for staff working part-time or various shifts so they can take training during work time? What changes could improve access for shift-based or part-time roles?
Balancing personal responsibilities if travel is needed to access training	What local, virtual, or modular training options could reduce this barrier?
Training not reflective of non-profit housing realities	Do staff report that training feels generic or disconnected from day-to-day work? How are staff applying what they learn in training into their work?

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Barrier	Reflection & Discussion Questions
Limited access to training outside major urban centres	What regional or hybrid approaches could help? Can organizations in the area partner to bring in relevant trainers to reduce travel for staff?
Frontline staff have fewer training opportunities than management	How is training prioritized across roles? How equitable is access across frontline, supervisory and leadership positions? What training is most needed by frontline staff?
Unclear connection between training and career progression	Do staff understand how training supports skill development or future roles? Are career pathways visible and discussed?
Difficulty knowing which training is relevant or available	How do staff find out about training opportunities? Is responsibility for identifying relevant training clearly defined?
Fatigue, burnout and emotional load	Are workload and emotional demands limiting staff capacity to engage in learning? Are training and supports available that address burnout and emotional labour?
Limited or inconsistent professional development budgets	How predictable is funding for training? How does budget uncertainty affect planning and access?
Concern about retention after employer-funded training	Is this based on evidence or perception? What tools (e.g., learning agreements) could balance staff development and retention?
High workloads limit time to access training	Which operational requirements most often displace training? How are trade-offs between immediate service needs and workforce development made?

BC Non-Profit Housing Association

FAQ: Addressing Burnout in B.C.'s Non-Profit Housing's Workforce through Training and Professional Development

66%
of workers report experiencing burnout sometimes, often, or extremely often

43%
of frontline workers report frequent secondary or vicarious trauma

34%
of frontline workers report frequent stress related to risk of violence

60%
of workers report working overtime

50%
Half of workersfeel their compensation reflects the emotional labour, safety risks and complexity of their work

As B.C.'s non-profit housing sector's workforce works to meet urgent housing demand and support needs, burnout has emerged as a critical workforce challenge, affecting staff well-being, organizational stability and sector sustainability. This fact sheet shares findings from the B.C. non-profit housing sector's labour market study to highlight key causes of burnout and how training and professional development can prevent and address staff burnout.

What causes burnout for staff in the sector?

There are many causes of burnout for staff working in B.C.'s non-profit sector, including systemic causes including systemic causes, workplace challenges and emotional labour of the work:

- High emotional labour and trauma exposure
- Challenging to navigate structures to arrange supports needed by tenants
- Vacancies and understaffing intensifying workload
- Frequent overtime
- Required to take on tasks outside of job descriptions or without adequate training
- Safety risks for staff
- Inconsistent availability of trauma-informed and culturally safe supports for staff

70%
of workers report needing more training to advance in their careers

29%
say unclear advancement opportunities make them consider leaving the sector

What are the Impacts of Burnout for the Sector's Workforce?

- High turnover and reduced retention: 1 in 3 workers do not plan to stay in the sector beyond 5 years
- Recruitment challenges: burnout makes roles harder to fill and contributes to sector reputation challenges
- Relationships with tenants: high staff turnover disrupts relationships with tenants
- Limits to professional development: burnout reduces capacity to build skills internally, impacting competency, safety and service quality

Why Training and Professional Development Are Central to Burnout Prevention

- Without access to adequate training, staff may feel under-qualified for their roles and the situations they face throughout their workday, leading to burnout
- Greatest need for training is identified by frontline staff and staff with lived-experience, but these groups experience greatest barriers to accessing training
- Limited opportunities to build skills and progress professionally contribute to burnout by reducing staff confidence in sustaining long-term careers in the sector

How Training and Professional Development Can Help Reduce Staff Burnout

- Builds staff confidence and competence to manage complex situations
- Reduces emotional strain by improving skills in trauma-informed practice, de-escalation and boundary setting
- Supports staff safety by strengthening risk awareness and preparedness
- Decreases isolation by creating opportunities for peer learning, mentorship and shared problem-solving
- Helps staff feel supported and invested in, rather than expected to cope without preparation
- Enables more effective supervision and debriefing
- Reinforces a sense of professional growth and future in the sector

Training Delivery Considerations

- Delivered in short, modular formats that can fit around shift work and heavy workloads
- Micro-credentials, PLAR options, paid training time and mentorship
- Scheduled to be accessible during paid work time, not reliant on personal time.
- Designed to be role-specific and sector-specific, reflecting the realities of non-profit housing work
- Available in regional, in-person or hybrid formats to reduce travel and isolation, especially outside major urban centres
- Offered through peer learning, mentorship and communities of practice to reduce isolation and support shared problem-solving
- Structured to allow incremental participation over time, rather than one-time or intensive programs
- Delivered with low-bandwidth options where needed to address connectivity limitations
- Provided equitably to frontline staff as well as supervisors and managers, not limited to leadership roles
- Clearly linked to career pathways, skill recognition and internal advancement, even where progression is gradual

What Training Can Support Burnout Prevention

- Trauma-informed practice and understanding vicarious trauma
- De-escalation, conflict resolution and managing risk and safety
- Boundary setting, ethics and professional judgment in complex situations
- Cultural safety and understanding of colonial impacts on housing and service delivery
- Navigating housing, health and social systems overload
- Supervisory skills for supporting staff well-being and managing emotional labour
- Managing workload, prioritization and self-care in high-pressure roles

BC Non-Profit Housing Association

How Organizations Compare to Sector Trends

This table is intended to help non-profit housing societies reflect on their recruitment, retention and professional development practices in the context of sector-wide workforce findings identified through the Labour Market Challenges and Solutions Study. It provides a structured way for organizations to consider how their experiences align with, or differ from, broader trends across B.C.'s non-profit housing sector.

The purpose of this tool is not to benchmark performance, compare organizations, or establish standards or expectations. Rather, it is designed to support evidence-informed discussion, planning and decision-making at the organizational level.

A contextual comparison helps organizations answer questions such as:

- Are our recruitment and retention pressures unique or widely experienced?
- Are our training challenges aligned with sector-wide barriers, or driven by local or organizational factors?
- Are staff expectations and experiences shaped by broader labour-market conditions?

Workforce Area	Sector-Wide Findings (from this Study)	How Organization Compares to Sector Trends	Organizational Reflection/ Discussion Prompts
Workforce tenure	Nearly half of workers have been in the sector less than 5 years; over one-third have more than 10 years' tenure.		How evenly distributed is experience across roles? Do you have staff to provide mentorship to newer staff?
Intent to leave	1 in 3 workers does not plan to remain in the sector beyond five years; intent is higher among frontline staff.		Are retention risks concentrated in specific roles or teams?

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Retirement	About 40% of workers are 45+ years.		What are succession plans?
Training need vs access	Frontline staff report the greatest need for training but face the most barriers to accessing it.		Do training opportunities align with where need is greatest?
Primary training barriers	Cost, lack of paid training time, backfill constraints, scheduling and travel are the most frequently cited barriers.		Which of these barriers are most relevant? Are there other barriers to offering training opportunities for staff?
Burnout prevalence	66% of workers report experiencing burnout sometimes, often, or extremely often. 43% of frontline staff report frequent secondary or vicarious trauma.		Does this vary by role? What kind of supports and training are needed to prevent and address staff burnout?
Professional development/ advancement	70% of workers say they need more training to grow their careers.		How visible are development and growth pathways for staff?
Indigenous workforce representation	Approximately 12% of the workforce identifies as Indigenous. Indigenous staff are disproportionately concentrated in frontline roles.		How are Indigenous staff distributed across roles in our organization? Do we operate in a culturally safe way?
Staff with lived-experience	Approximately 30% of the workforce reports lived-experience related to housing insecurity or homelessness. Staff with lived-experience are more likely to be in frontline roles.		How do we recognize, support and develop staff with lived-experience across different roles?