



Communication Link

ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority

Industry needs research report

Version 3

July 2025

Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, Communication Link acknowledges the Ngunnawal people, Traditional Custodians of the land on which our head office resides. We acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of our community in Canberra and the region. We also acknowledge all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of all land on which our work and connections may reach, and pay our respect to their Elders, past and present.



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Shaping the future workforce

Identifying key training needs for 2026 and beyond

Current and future training and development needs within the ACT Building and Construction Industry for the Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority's (TFA) 2026 Training Plan.



PRIORITY AREA FOR TRAINING NEEDS

Persistent skills gaps

Critical shortage in core trades (plumbing, electrical, carpentry) and foundational knowledge

- 65% of survey respondents concerned about skilled worker availability.

Future skills needs and upskilling

Demand for sustainability/ green building skills and crucial need to upskill existing workers in new technologies

OTHER CORE PRIORITIES

Effectiveness, innovation, and inclusivity of training

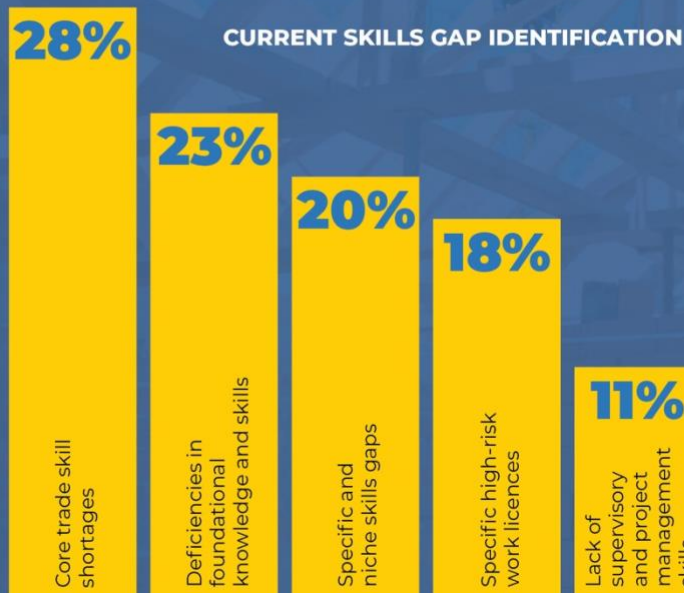
Mixed satisfaction with current training; strong call for practical, industry-led, flexible delivery. Major barriers to participation and diversity (high costs, cultural issues, migrant recognition)

Alignment with industry and government priorities

Ensuring training programs rigorously match industry standards, the National Construction Code, and government procurement mandates

Emergent issues and strategic challenges

TFA faces mandate/funding model constraints (RTO-accredited focus, market impact), and broader challenges like employer education and perception of trades



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Address core skills gaps: fund accredited training for critical trade shortages (e.g. plumbing, electrical, carpentry) where user choice funding is not provided and essential foundational knowledge like the National Construction Code (NCC).

Prepare for future demands: invest in accredited programs for sustainable building, green practices, digital literacy and new technologies

Support civil works boom: fund specialised licenses and machinery operation training for the anticipated civil works demand.

Ease financial barriers: provide rebates for mandatory entry-level safety training to reduce costs for new entrants.

Enhance digital access: fund digital literacy training within programs to improve accessibility for online learning.

Promote practical training: encourage Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to deliver practical, industry-led, face-to-face training with current professionals, moving beyond 'tick-box exercises'.

Align curriculum with industry: work with RTOs and industry to update curriculum to match current best practices and employer needs.

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Context

The ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority (TFA) is mandated to address skills gaps in the ACTs building and construction industry through providing rebates for training delivered by Registered Training Organisations to eligible workers. The TFA produces an annual Training Plan in accordance with part 5 of the *Building and Construction Industry Training Levy Act 1999*, to prioritise training support. The plan is informed by a research project to identify key skills gaps. This ensures that training is prioritised based on up-to-date information, is responding to shifting sector needs, and is aligned with ACT government and workforce development goals.

The following report provides a description of the research project and results, including:

- methodology
- stakeholder engagement activities
- data analysis and key findings
- recommendations.

The report highlights which priority training areas emerged from the research and concludes with recommendations for the TFAs 2026 Training Plan.

1.2 Summary of engagement and findings

The research was guided by an overarching Evaluation Framework to ensure data quality and guide stakeholder engagement. A combination of approaches was used to collect quantitative and qualitative data. A desktop review was undertaken of existing literature on national and ACT-specific workforce trends, and feedback was obtained from sector stakeholders through interviews, workshops, and surveys.

1.2.1 Key findings

Across respondents there were common themes around current and projected skills gaps. Mandatory training and basic as well as specialised training in the core trades were regarded as top priority for the ACT, particularly with a pipeline of capital projects in the works which have different requirements to residential building. Feedback also centred around workers not having a solid enough foundational skills and knowledge to draw on as they start and progress their careers. Figure 1 shows a summary of the key areas identified with skill gaps.

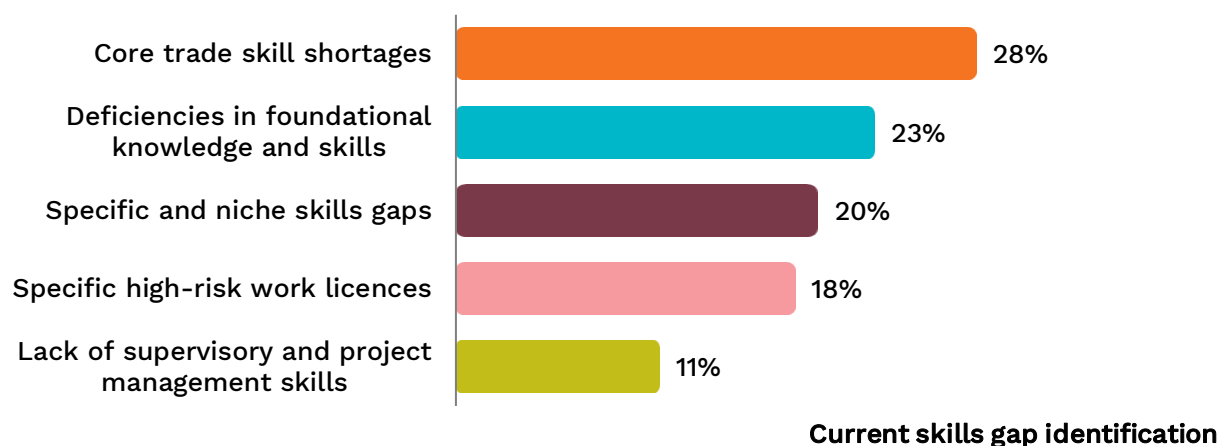


Figure 1 - Representation of frequency of current skills gap identification

To future proof the workforce, stakeholders highlighted the need to upskill or reskill for emerging building and construction areas, including sustainability and green building skills and emerging technologies.

There were no major problems indicated in current training delivery, however areas for improvement were highlighted, particularly a call for practical, industry led, and flexible training, rather than theoretical or 'tick box' approaches.

There was agreement among stakeholders that training should align with ACT government priorities, including updated compliance requirements around workplace culture, health and well-being.

1.3 Recommendations

Several priorities were identified for funding inclusion and consideration in TFAs 2026 Training Plan:

- Fund accredited training programs that directly address critical shortages in core trades (e.g. plumbing, electrical, carpentry, tiling, plastering, painting, roof plumbing, and concreting), where user choice funding is not provided.
- Fund accredited training programs that prepare the workforce for new demands in sustainability and green building practices (e.g. solar installation, energy efficiency audits), digital literacy (including Building Information Modelling (BIM), digital twins, and data management software), and specific new technologies (e.g. hydrogen technology for plumbers and electricians)
- Fund specialised licence and 'ticket' training needed for the coming civil works boom, such as advanced machinery operation
- Fund programs which ease direct financial burdens for new entrants, such as rebates for mandatory entry-level safety training (white card, silica awareness, asbestos awareness, Working Safely with Asbestos Containing Materials (WSWACM), personal protective equipment (PPE))
- Fund digital literacy training within funded programs to help those struggling with online learning, ensuring wider access
- Fund Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) in delivering enhanced training modules for foundational knowledge, including practical application of the National Construction Code and Australian Standards.
- Provide feedback to RTOs and industry groups regarding ACT specific training needs research undertaken to assist with decision making, ensuring it directly matches current industry best practices and employer needs.

1.4 Conclusion

The research confirms significant and evolving training needs in the ACT construction sector. It highlights the importance of responsive, inclusive, and future-focused training strategies. The recommendations aim to guide TFA's 2026 Training Plan toward impactful, equitable, and sustainable workforce development.



2. Background

The ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority (TFA) is a Statutory Authority mandated to support training priorities that address skill gaps in the Australian Capital Territory's building and construction sector. The TFA itself does not provide training and its budget is dependent on sector activity.

The TFA collects a 0.2% levy on building and construction projects above \$10,000 undertaken in the ACT, which is then used to fund training for workers in the industry. The TFA provides funding towards the cost of training in the form of rebates paid to eligible workers on completion for training delivered by a Registered Training Organisation (RTO). Training may be accredited or non-accredited providing it is delivered by an RTO. Applications for funding can be made by the RTO or an ABN holder either employing or providing support services to the person undertaking training.

The current 2025 Training Plan supports capacity building and certification across the sector and trades, digital and financial literacy, safety, and sustainability.

2.1 The 2026 Training Plan

TFA bases its annual training plans on research gathered through sector reports and firsthand consultations on existing and projected skills gaps. This ensures there is a strong evidence base for selected training priorities, which are identified through expert opinions and diverse voices from across the industry. It also ensures a plan that is responsive to sector needs and aligned with broader workforce development goals.

A four-month research phase was commissioned by the TFA from mid-March 2025 to mid-July 2025, to inform the development of the 2026 Training Plan. The TFA was the key reference point for checking the relevance and appropriateness of the research including identifying stakeholders and reviewing methodology.



3. Research methodology

3.1 Evaluation framework

The research to identify TFA's 2026 priorities was guided by an evaluation framework for implementing and assessing the research. The framework specifies a rigorous, relevant and effective approach to engaging with key stakeholders, and collating and analysing data. Specific criteria and a consistent methodology were used to assure:

- quality of the data collected
- robustness of the analysis
- integration of stakeholder participation
- relevance of the recommendations for the 2026 Training Plan.

A core focus of the framework was to (continuously) evaluate the research project's effectiveness in achieving its objectives and to solicit stakeholder feedback on engagement activities.

The research considered both the process around identifying needs and delivering training in the sector, as well as the long-term impacts of the training in addressing skills gaps.

A line of questioning was developed based on the framework and applied across all data collection measures. This consistency allowed for comparisons, triangulation, and verification across the research data sets.

Key research ethical considerations underpinned each activity so that all engagement was principled and respondent driven, data was protected, and confidentiality maintained.

3.2 Key evaluation objectives and criteria

The aim of the research was to review existing sector reports (desktop research) and collect primary data through engaging directly with people working in building and construction, to identify current and future training and development needs within the ACT.

Key research objectives were to:

- provide a comprehensive analysis of existing skills gaps and training effectiveness
- forecast future skills requirements
- identify and recommend appropriate training programs, qualifications, and delivery methods
- offer strategic guidance on aligning training initiatives with industry priorities and ACT Government workforce development strategies.

A set of criteria outlined in Table 1 were identified and a consistent line of inquiry (including specific key evaluation questions) for all engagement activities was framed around the criteria. The questions considered factors such as technological advancements, sustainability practices, government priorities and legislation, and evolving workforce demographics.

Table 1 – Research criteria



Research criteria	Description	Indicators
Current skills gap identification	This criterion guides the research process for identifying current skills gaps, ensuring all relevant sectors, job roles, and skill types are considered.	- Breadth of data sources used (e.g., industry reports, stakeholder input) - Coverage of key construction sectors - Inclusion of both technical and soft skills.
Future skills needs forecasting	This criterion guides the process of projecting future skills needs, ensuring the use of reliable forecasting methods, consideration of relevant trends, and validation by stakeholders.	- Consideration of technological advancements, government policies, and economic trends - Inclusion of perspectives from industry experts and stakeholders.
Effectiveness, innovation and inclusivity of existing training	This criterion assesses stakeholder perceptions of how effectively existing TFA-funded training programs address current industry needs, incorporate innovation (including emerging technologies, sustainable practices, and modern delivery methods) and promote diversity and inclusion.	- Stakeholder satisfaction with existing TFA-funded training - Perceived relevance of existing training to current skills gaps - Perceived relevance of existing training to the diverse needs of the ACT construction workforce. - Extent to which existing training incorporates emerging technologies, sustainability practices and diversity and inclusion principles. - Stakeholder perceptions of innovation and accessibility in training delivery methods (e.g., online, blended learning)
Effectiveness of stakeholder consultation	This criterion guides the stakeholder engagement process, ensuring diverse voices are heard and feedback is effectively incorporated into the research.	- Representativeness of stakeholder groups involved - Clarity and transparency of communication - Mechanisms for feedback collection and integration - Demonstrable influence of stakeholder input on the research findings.
Alignment with industry and government priorities	This criterion guides the alignment of research findings and recommendations with the strategic priorities of both the ACT Government and the construction industry.	- Mapping of recommendations to government workforce development strategies and industry goals - Potential for long-term workforce development impact.



4. Desktop review of sector workforce trends

Secondary research was undertaken through reviewing existing reports and updates from key organisations, to capture building and construction workforce trends within Australia and the ACT. The desktop research established a benchmark on current and future skills and capacity needs, which was a reference point to direct primary research with key industry stakeholders around identifying training priorities for the ACT building and construction industry.

The key learnings from this research are explored further in this section. A full list of reference material used for this desktop research is included in Appendix B.

4.1 Sector challenges

4.1.1 Inadequate supply and skills nationally

Data from the Master Builders Australia May 2024 report indicates that the nationwide construction workforce has grown by 3.9 %, with an increase of 51,000 new workers. Despite this expansion, there is still a serious shortage of workforce supply nationally. Multiple factors account for the shortfall, including at least three consecutive years where the number of new apprentices is decreasing, a high level of dropouts¹, and decreased productivity.

While the overall labour market in Australia is demonstrating a gradual loosening, this may not significantly impact the high demand that is being felt in building and construction. There is also a skills gap in the sector, and low availability for qualified workers in key high demand trades such as electricians, plumbers and carpenters.

We can predict that there will continue to be pressure on matching the building and construction workforce supply with market needs.

4.1.2 High levels of demand

In addition to ongoing demands from large public sector and infrastructure projects, the federal government has set ambitious new construction targets to respond to the housing crisis and meet sustainability goals:

- Commitment to building 1.2 million new dwellings under the Housing Accord
- Transition to net zero by 2050

These targets will add to the current and predicted strain on supply and will require additional labour and new skills. To meet the Housing Accord goal within the stated five years, BuildSkills Australia asserts the government would need to build 60,000 homes per quarter, requiring a workforce of 90,000 people more than what currently exists.

According to a recent Access report, the increasing gap in skilled talent will affect delivery timelines and cause other ripples such as increased wage and construction costs.

Within the ACT, a pipeline of capital projects will add to pressure for a skilled and future proof cohort of workers.

¹ The number of entrants is greater than dropouts.



4.2 Sector trend analysis

4.2.1 ACT Government priorities

A core focus of the National Skills and Workforce Agenda for the ACT is on the construction industry. The government has multiple initiatives for supporting vocational and education training (VET) and enabling a strong supply chain of skilled workers.

The demand for workers outweighs their availability in the ACT, but local construction dropped in 2024 and shows signs of a softer labour market, which some attribute to the delays in building approvals in the residential space. However, in its September 2024 forecast after the Housing Accord was announced, Master Builders Association of the ACT highlights that attracting and retaining apprentices will be critical in addressing any supply constraints. Education and training pathways can ensure the way into the industry is adaptive, relevant, and meets the need for various potential workers.

4.2.2 Focus on inclusion and diversity

Organisations are looking at workforce development and inclusion to grow and strengthen the labour supply. Initiatives which focus on bringing in younger workers and underrepresented groups such as women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and migrants, are likely to gain traction.

4.2.3 Women in construction

Women in the construction industry are extremely underrepresented (13.6 % as of May 2024) and a poorly tapped resource to address the skills and labour shortage. The National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) was recently quoted as stating they wanted to increase women in the industry to 30%. Women apprentices continue to drop out at a higher rate (72%) than men and NAWIC aims to reduce that attrition rate to 50%, similar to their male counterparts.

The industry is not only male dominated, but roles are also gendered. 77.3 % of administrative occupations are filled by women, whereas a mere 3.7% of women are technicians and in trades and 5.3 % are labourers.

Understanding and addressing what constrains women from joining and staying in the industry will need to be integrated into recruitment and training strategies. The ACT has one of the highest representations of women apprentices in construction trades (6.1%).

4.3 Current mandated industry training requirements

WorkSafe ACT outlines the following mandatory training that all workers on construction sites in the ACT are required to undertake:

- General Construction Induction Training must be completed by any worker on a construction site through a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) (General Construction Induction Training is the competency unit CPCWHS1001 - Prepare to work safely in the construction industry). Upon completion of this training, the participant is eligible to apply for the General Construction Induction Card, otherwise known as a White Card with Access Canberra.
- Asbestos Awareness Training (11084NAT - Course in Asbestos Awareness) is mandated for workers on construction sites.
- Occupations where workers may encounter materials that contain asbestos, must complete Working Safely with Asbestos Containing Materials (WSWACM) training (11348NAT – Course in Working Safely with Asbestos Containing Materials) through an RTO (10 trades as mandated by WorkSafe ACT), in addition to Asbestos Awareness Training.
- Silica awareness training (10830NAT – Course in Crystalline Silica Exposure Prevention).



4.4 Building and construction training needs

The desktop research provided a preliminary picture of building and construction sector needs in the ACT. Mandatory training will continue to be a priority, and while demand for traditional trades may ebb and flow, related skills will remain a core focus for the sector. Emerging areas for skills and capacity building relate to the national commitments on sustainability and safety, and local legislative changes to building safety codes. There is also a shift in how training is approached to ensure adaptability and an inclusive workforce.

Additional areas of need which relate to building a resilient and agile workforce include:

- With the labour and experience shortage, companies are turning to reskilling and upskilling current employees
- Lifelong learning and on-the-job learning are gaining importance in a shifting labour stream
- Net zero initiatives may require new training in lowering carbon footprints such as emissions, sustainable materials and approaches, plus upskilling of electricians
- The revised building safety regulatory environment may require upskilling in safety measures
- Technology skills
- Continued Professional Development (CPD)
- Soft skills and training on inclusive work culture
- Communication and collaboration to enable emerging technologies and work changes

4.5 Limitations of data reviewed

There was a lack of recent and substantive research on ACT specific building and construction skills gaps and priorities. Industry reports available on general sector trends are from 2024. However, the first-hand collection of data with stakeholders from across the building and construction industry amplified the understanding gleaned from the desktop review.



5. Engagement activities and tools

5.1 Purpose of engagement

The primary purpose of stakeholder engagement was to gather rich, real-world data on training and development needs directly from those involved in or impacted by the ACT building and construction industry. This ensured the relevance and practical applicability of the research findings, generating a sense of ownership over the outcomes and future recommendations.

5.2 Description of activities

Effective stakeholder engagement was a cornerstone of this research project, ensuring that the findings were grounded in diverse industry experiences and perspectives. The engagement process was designed to be inclusive, capturing insights from a wide array of participants crucial to the ACT building and construction ecosystem. A series of engagement activities were undertaken to maximise participation from across the building and construction sectors, and to capture multiple viewpoints. A mixture of both qualitative and quantitative methods was used in the activities to attain breadth as well as depth of information.

The research project included the following:

- **Key Informant interviews** were conducted with a select cohort of industry leaders. These provided in-depth, expert perspectives from targeted stakeholders from segments of the ACT construction industry. These interviews were held at the start of the research process and helped surface themes and directions for subsequent workshops to verify and explore. An interview guide based on the key evaluation questions was used to provide general parameters and prompts for the interviews.
- **Two focused workshops** were held for industry stakeholders including government, industry associations, employers, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and Group Training Organisations (GTOs). The workshops enabled collaborative discussions and the exchange of ideas among key sector groups.
- **A survey** was deployed to the TFA stakeholder list and Industry leaders were encouraged to share the survey to their relevant members and networks. Select phone surveys were also conducted to encourage greater participation. The survey captured details on demographics and allowed for input from a wider range of individuals across various roles and experience levels within the sector. It gathered quantifiable data on current skills gaps, satisfaction with existing training programs, and priorities for future training investment. Participants included a diverse range of individuals, such as apprentices, tradespeople, supervisors, site managers, executive management, and representatives from training organisations and industry bodies.

5.3 Stakeholders and participation

Requests for interviews were sent to six key informants from different sector organisations, with an invite for them to include their team members; five informants accepted, and interviews were held online or face to face. One key informant Construction Industry Training Council (CITC) declined to participate.

Invitations were sent to 36 stakeholders to participate in one of two workshops. There was an option for one workshop to be face to face, however there was limited interest in this so both workshops were held online. A combined total of 14 stakeholders participated in the workshops.



The survey was directly deployed to approximately 400 people from all parts of the building and construction sector; 41 responses were received.

5.4 Interaction and quality of input

In general, all requests for interviews were accepted and were held online or face to face. Interviewees were generous with their feedback and advice, both on training priorities and the wider context in the sector. Both workshops were online and utilised virtual tools to encourage interaction while also allowing for some anonymity and 'safe space'. Participants actively contributed their views and were mostly willing to share these openly.

While the detailed data analysis and findings are presented in the next section, the engagement process itself revealed several high-level themes regarding the consultation:

- **Value of consultation:** There was a strong appreciation among stakeholders for being actively consulted on critical issues related to training and workforce development. All interview respondents (6 in total from five organisations) felt that they were able to share frank feedback. Feedback forms from the workshops indicated participants felt the purpose was clear and they were easily able to contribute their input.
- **Desire for actionable outcomes:** Participants expressed a clear expectation that the research findings would translate into tangible improvements and strategic guidance for the TFA's 2026 Training Plan.
- **Diversity of perspectives:** The engagement process successfully captured varied viewpoints, often highlighting different priorities or challenges depending on the stakeholder group's role within the industry. For instance, RTOs might focus on curriculum alignment, while industry representatives might prioritise practical skills and immediate workforce needs.

Feedback from surveys, interviews and workshops was overwhelmingly positive on the content and facilitation.

5.5 Data quality assurance

To ensure the findings from the primary research are trustworthy, a strong data quality assurance process was used throughout the project. This covered both quantitative and qualitative data, aiming for consistent, accurate, and complete information.

For quantitative data (online survey):

- **Survey design and piloting:** The survey was carefully designed with clear questions. Independent testing was undertaken first to fix any issues before it went live
- **Data cleaning and validation:** After exporting data, a thorough cleaning process checked for:
 - Missing information
 - Unusual responses that might indicate errors
 - Consistency between related answers
 - Open-ended responses were reviewed for clarity
- **Data integrity:** All data was stored securely and backed up regularly and coding was reliable and consistent.

For qualitative data (interviews, workshops, open-ended comments):

- Consistent guides were used for interviews and workshops to ensure similar questions were asked across all discussions.
- Interviews and workshops were recorded (with permission). Transcriptions were then checked against the audio for accuracy.



- Thematic coding of qualitative data was done systematically.
- A coding framework was developed and refined as needed.

All qualitative data, including interview transcripts, workshop notes, and open-ended survey comments, were subjected to systematic coding to identify recurring patterns, concepts, and priority focus areas. A numerical value was added to each piece of feedback and aligned with the predetermined criteria areas of the research project, while also allowing for the emergence of new, unforeseen themes. This approach enabled an analysis of the significance for both quantitative and qualitative data.

5.5.1 Overall triangulation

Using multiple data sources (desktop research, quantitative survey, qualitative interviews/workshops) improved data quality. Comparing findings from different sources helped confirm themes and identify areas of agreement or difference, making the conclusions more robust. Any differences were investigated. Collection and reviews of data by multiple team members reduced the risk of researcher bias. Outlier or minority views were also considered and provided nuance for wider feedback.

5.6 Limitations

Multiple approaches and follow up opportunities were deployed to capture different cohorts and increase the number of stakeholders to maximise input. However, due to the constraints of work and busy schedules, participation numbers were limited. This was mitigated by the quality and depth of input provided by smaller engagement activities.



6. Research findings

6.1 Key themes and priorities

This section presents the key findings of the research project combining insights from desktop research, quantitative data collected via an online survey, and qualitative insights gathered from key informant interviews, stakeholder workshops, and open-ended survey responses. Research findings have been organised according to the research criteria as detailed in Table 1.

The analysis of quantitative and qualitative data of feedback has revealed a number of distinct priorities among stakeholders. *Current skills gap identification* emerged as the most frequently discussed focus area, followed closely by *Challenges with inclusivity and accessibility* underscoring the systemic barriers perceived by industry stakeholders.

Figure 2 shows a summary of the key themes explored and the relative frequency of discussion during the research process.



Figure 2 - Representation of frequency of key research themes

6.2 Current skills gap identification

The research consistently identified significant skills gaps within the ACT building and construction industry, posing challenges to business growth.

Desktop research indicates a national shortage of skilled tradespeople, a trend strongly confirmed and made worse by local conditions in the ACT. Survey data (figure 3 below) revealed a general concern among 66% of respondents about the availability of necessary skills, with 15% reporting that skilled workers were 'Not at all available,' and 51% indicated they were 'Somewhat available'.



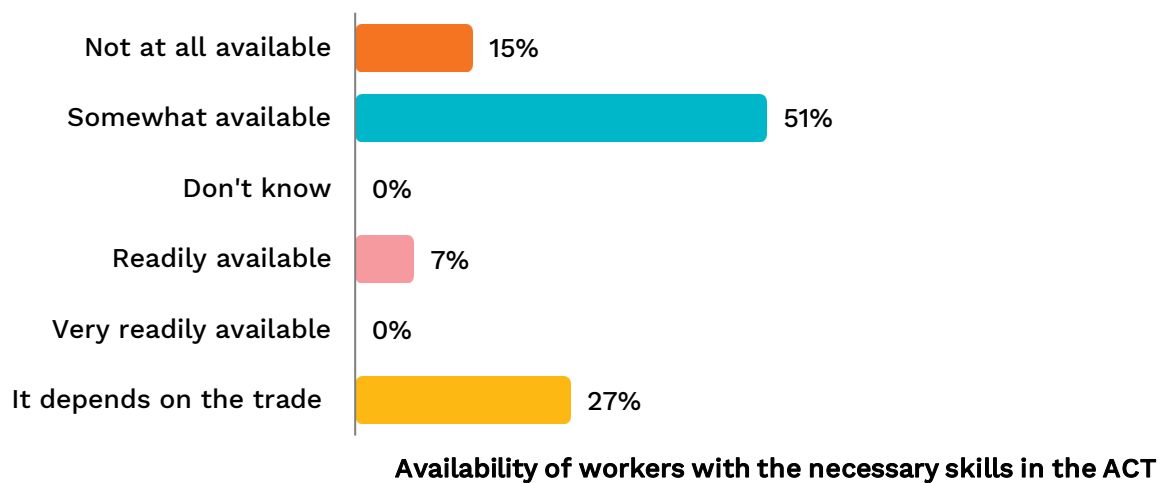


Figure 3 - Survey responses on availability of skills in the ACT

The key gaps identified through all research areas occurred across core trades, foundational knowledge, higher-level management skills and specific licensing or niche areas detailed in Figure 4 below.

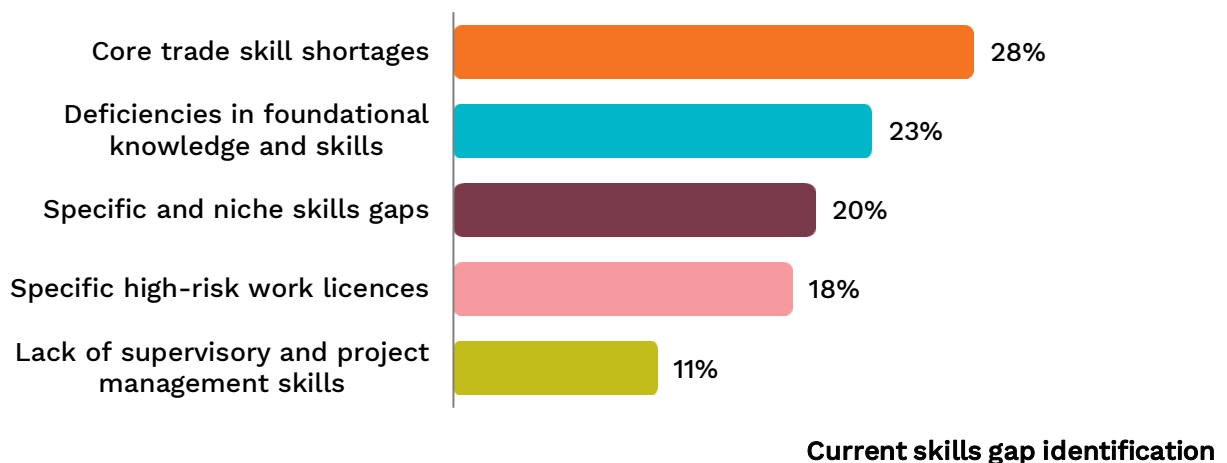


Figure 4 - Analysis of coded feedback on current skills gap identification

6.2.1 Core trade skills shortages

Engagement feedback and desktop research consistently pointed to a critical skill gap in terms of core trade skill shortages.

Specific skill areas repeatedly cited included plumbing, electrical, carpentry, tiling, plastering, painting, roof plumbing, and concreting. Industry representatives highlighted the direct impact, stating that this shortage is "impacting the ability of businesses to take on jobs and grow". In the survey 76% of respondents felt the lack of skills impacted job opportunities in the sector.

6.2.2 Specific trade or specialised skills

While less frequently highlighted than core trade shortages, specific and specialised skills gaps were identified that impact particular aspects of industry operations. These include a specific gap in qualified and experienced trades such as heavy vehicle drivers, arborists, mechanical plumbers, waterproofing and duct installers.



Survey respondents highlighted specialised or specific technical skills as the most difficult to find in potential hires (68%), including electrical, plumbing, carpentry, HVAC, tiling, and concreting. Plumbing is repeatedly mentioned as a specific skill that is very scarce or unavailable.

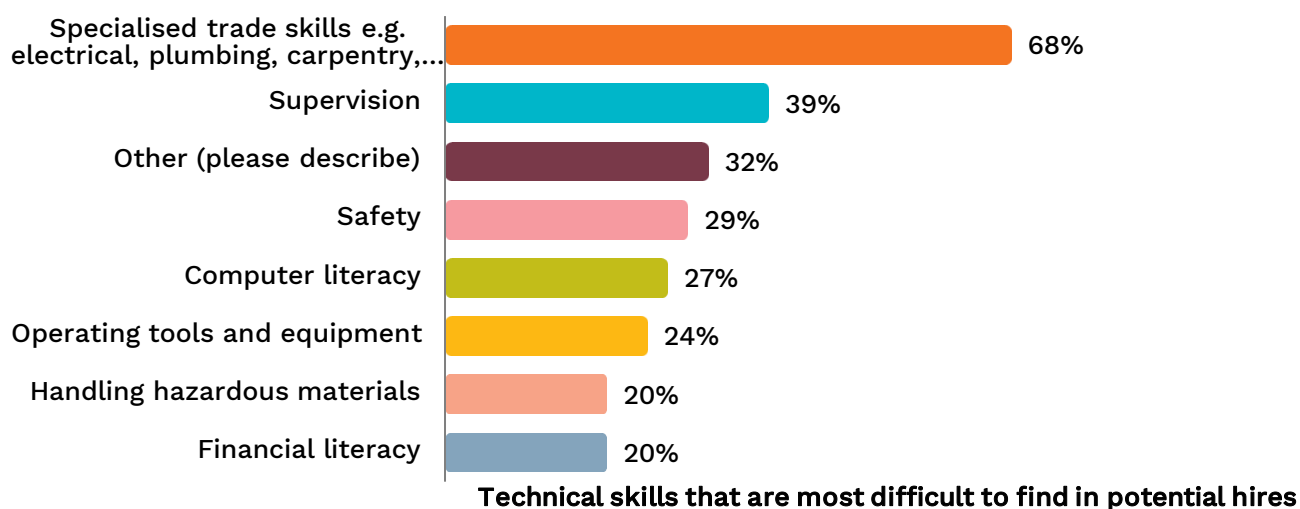


Figure 5 – Survey responses relating to specific technical skills hard to find in potential hires

6.2.3 Deficiencies in foundational knowledge and basics

Beyond specific trade skills, both desktop research and qualitative data revealed a strong concern regarding foundational knowledge. Stakeholders expressed that many workers, particularly new entrants, "lack the foundational knowledge and the ability to apply National Construction Code and Australian Standards effectively". This concern extends to very basic skills, with one comment noting the need for proficiency in "reading a tape measure." This suggests a gap not just in high-level compliance, but in fundamental practical application.

6.2.4 Lack of supervisory and project management skills

The combined research also identified skills gaps at higher levels of responsibility. Qualitative data indicated clear gaps in "supervision, project management, and leadership" capabilities within the industry. This suggests a potential issue in effective project management, which can impact overall project delivery and quality.

These concerns about limited pathways and progression were also noted impacting the skills gap in this area. In responding to the survey question about training and development needs, a respondent noted, "we need to provide a path for young leaders and thinkers to flood our industry and change the future of construction with fresh thinking".

6.2.5 Specific high-risk work licences

Desktop research often highlights regulatory requirements for high-risk work and the complexities associated with obtaining them. This was supported through engagement feedback where stakeholder shared difficulties and "long waiting times [to get into training courses] for obtaining high-risk work licences" in the ACT. Examples provided included working at heights, confined spaces, forklift, EWP, crane operation, and dogging. These delays often drive workers to seek training in other states, causing operational concerns and increased costs for ACT businesses.

6.3 Future skills needs forecasting

The industry recognises the dynamic nature of the building and construction sector, with anticipated shifts driven by technology, sustainability goals, and projected infrastructure demands.



6.3.1 Sustainability and green building skills

Desktop research consistently shows a global and national need for sustainable building and net-zero goals. This is strongly felt in the ACT, where stakeholders clearly understand that "sustainability skills and knowledge are crucial for the industry, aligning with ACT Government's net-zero commitments." This need covers areas from energy efficiency to sustainable materials.

6.3.2 Upskilling existing workers

Combined primary and secondary research indicates that the rapid pace of technological advancements and the increasing focus on sustainable practices will force a proactive approach to developing the current workforce. Feedback and data consistently suggest a clear need to upskill and reskill existing employees across various areas.

In addition, the digital transformation of the construction industry is a key trend identified in broader industry analyses and confirms a strong local demand for digital and data literacy. Industry stakeholders highlighted emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), robotics, Building Information Modelling (BIM), digital twins, and advanced project, risk, and data management systems are "anticipated to have a significant positive impact," thereby driving a pronounced need for new digital and data proficiency skills across the workforce. Stakeholders also identified digital accessibility in training as a future demand citing an increasing reliance on online learning, digital quizzes, and information uploads for training, which could be a struggle for those "not tech savvy."

Quantitative survey data indicated the advancements in Prefabricated materials, Artificial intelligence (AI), and Project, risk, and data management will have the greatest positive impact on construction in the ACT in the next 3-5 years as shown in Figure 6 below.

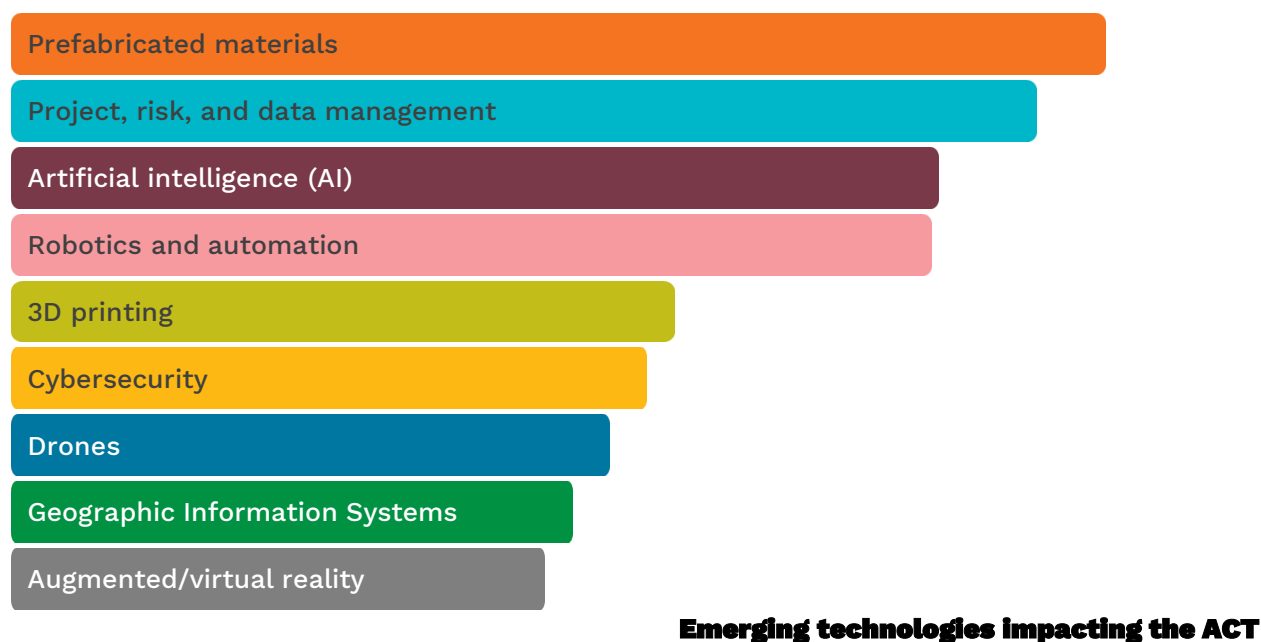


Figure 6 – Summary of survey rankings on impact of emerging or improved technologies on the construction industry

6.3.3 Specific emerging technologies in trades

Beyond broad digital skills and general upskilling, the research found a need for very specific technical training due to climate commitments. A number of stakeholder interviewees suggested the introduction of hydrogen technology would require significant technical upskilling, including for "...for plumbers and electricians, driven by ACT Government Net Zero commitments". This highlights how traditional trades are changing with emerging technologies.



6.3.4 Anticipated civil works boom

The desktop research indicated high demands from large public sector and infrastructure projects, and ambitious new construction targets to meet the housing crisis and sustainability goals will require additional labour and new skills. Qualitative firsthand feedback confirmed a "massive pipeline" of civil infrastructure projects in the ACT. This boom will need workers with "specific tickets and licences" for machinery, rather than just traditional trade apprenticeships. This means a different kind of skill demand compared to building homes or businesses.

6.4 Effectiveness, innovation, and inclusivity of existing training

Feedback showed mixed views on how well current training works, a strong demand for new and flexible delivery methods, and significant barriers for people to join and stay in the workforce.

6.4.1 Effectiveness of training

Survey results indicated mixed views on general satisfaction with current training programs as detailed in Figure 7 below. While survey results indicate that there were very mixed views on existing training, stakeholder feedback from in depth interviews highlighted significant concern was voiced that current programs are "not adequately preparing individuals for the job," suggesting a disconnect between theoretical training and practical industry requirements. This aligns with broader industry discussions in the workshops about vocational training needing to keep pace with real-world practice.

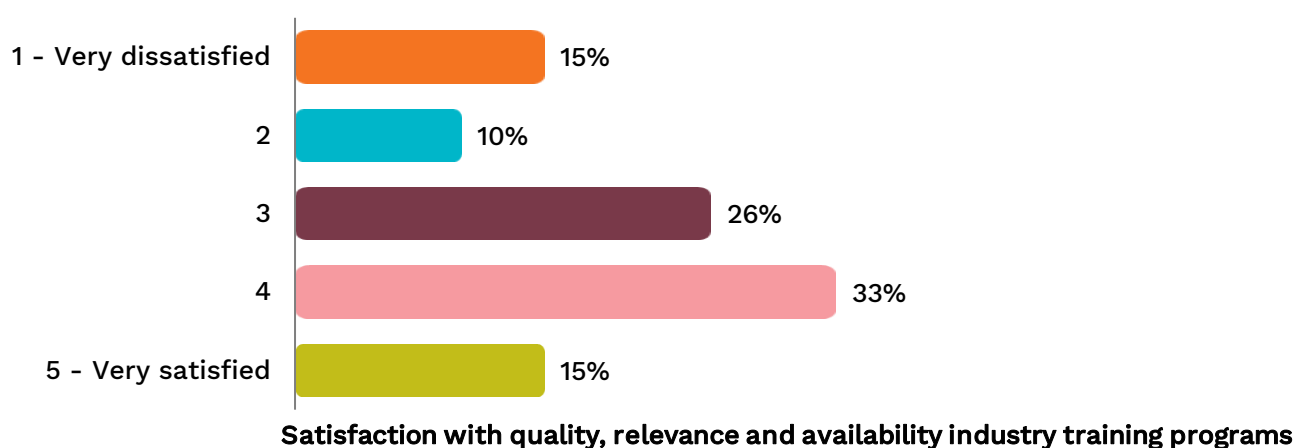


Figure 7 – Survey results on current industry training programs

6.4.2 Innovation and flexibility

A consistent theme across engagement was the call for more "practical, face-to-face training delivered by currently engaged industry professionals." This shows a preference for real-world learning, moving away from "tick-box exercises" and too much online theory. Also, demanding and often inflexible construction work hours were a big barrier, especially for women with childcare and younger generations seeking work-life balance. This directly affects their ability to access training. As more training goes online, the research noted that "the increasing reliance on online learning in training can be a struggle for individuals who are "not tech savvy", pointing to a digital access challenge needing flexible solutions."



6.4.3 Barriers to access, training, and diversity

The research found several major barriers to inclusion and access in the ACT building and construction industry. These affect how diverse the workforce is and how well it keeps workers. Challenges include financial, structural, and cultural issues.

- **Financial and entry barriers** – Desktop research often identifies initial training costs as a barrier to entry for various industries. In the ACT building and construction sector, qualitative feedback highlighted that the "cost of mandatory entry-level safety training (white card, silica awareness, asbestos awareness, PPE) is a significant barrier for new entrants". This is particularly impactful for "young school leavers without financial support", deterring potential new talent from industry entry.

The survey explored respondents' perceptions of key barriers to entry into the construction industry. As depicted in Figure 8 below, 28% indicated accessibility issues as a key barrier to entry, however the option "Other" was identified as the most significant barrier by 33% of respondents". Qualitative analysis of open-ended specifications showed that the majority of these pointed to financial or cost-related issues, reinforcing the prominence of financial factors as a barrier

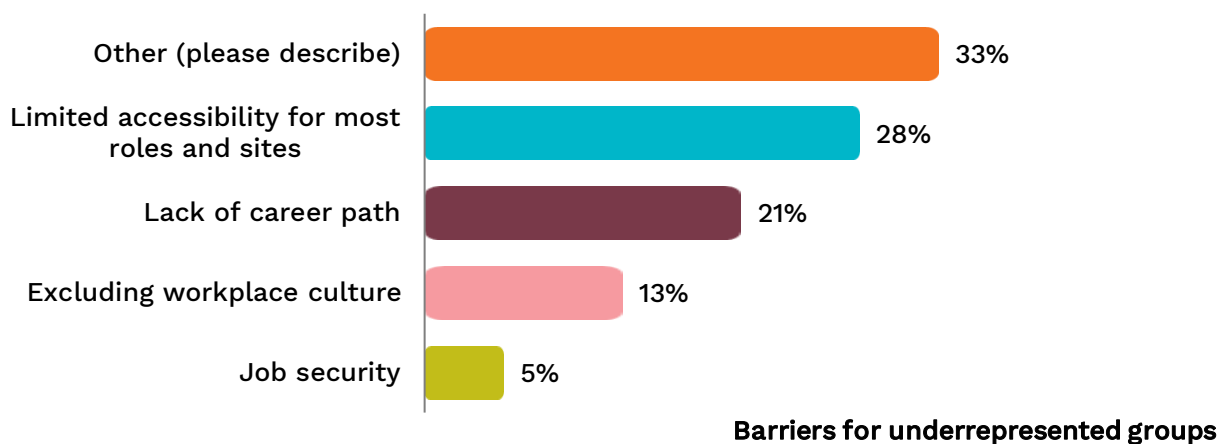


Figure 8 – Survey results on entry barriers for underrepresented groups in the construction industry

- **Cultural and retention barriers** – Another issue identified in the survey as a barrier to entry and high attrition rates was an "excluding workplace culture" (13%). Qualitative data cited "sexual harassment, racism, and general inappropriate behaviour", which is a "major deterrent for underrepresented groups, particularly women." This culture leads to "high dropout rates (72% for female apprentices in the first year)", showing a strong need for cultural change to improve retention and diversity. A consistent theme was that "attracting new talent, retaining existing workers, and improving industry culture are inextricably linked and cannot be addressed in isolation".
- **Underrepresentation** – The combined research also highlights some existing gaps in representation across some key groups. Desktop research revealed women are extremely underrepresented in the construction industry (13.6%) and had a significant dropout rate (72%). Perceptions from survey responses also indicated perceived gaps in representation with women in non-traditional vocations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and at-risk youth the most likely to be underrepresented in the ACT construction industry as shown in Figure 9 below.



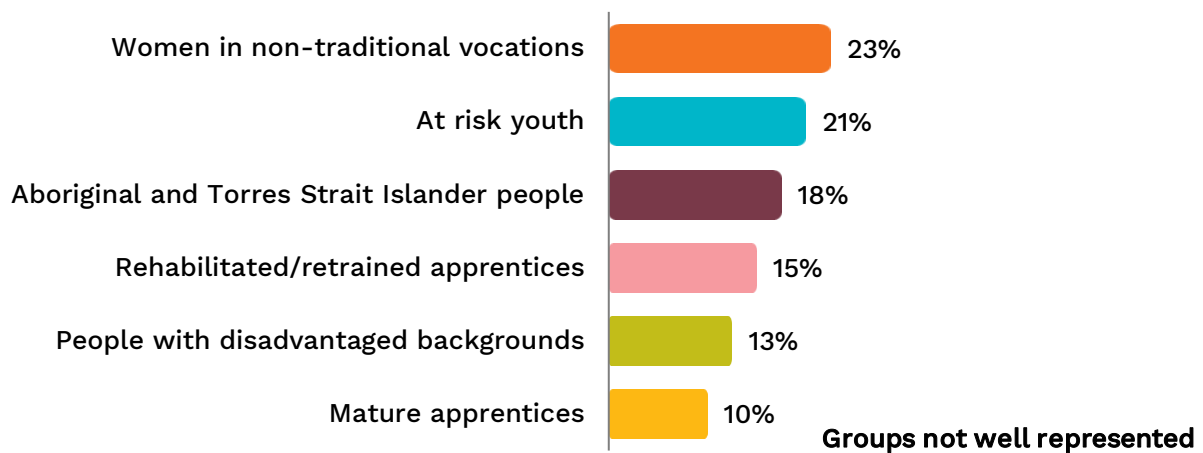


Figure 9 – Survey data on perceptions of groups underrepresented in the ACT construction industry

- Systemic and recognition barriers** – Despite a global pool of experienced workers, the research revealed "significant costs (approx. \$10,000) and barriers exist for skilled migrants to get their overseas qualifications recognised and find employment". This indicates a systemic issue where valuable experience and skills are underutilised due to complex and expensive recognition processes. Another key barrier identified were perceived disadvantages for employers to hire mature-age apprentices. Stakeholders reported that "higher award wages for apprentices over 21 make them financially less attractive to employers". This reality is "limiting opportunities for mature-age individuals, women returning to work, and skilled migrants" who may be seeking career changes or re-entry into the workforce.

6.5 Alignment with industry and government priorities

The combined research underscored the critical importance of aligning training initiatives with current industry best practices and overarching ACT Government strategic goals.

6.5.1 The importance of industry standard alignment

Consistent with regulatory frameworks highlighted in desktop research, there was "overwhelming agreement that ACT training programs must align rigorously with industry best practices, Australian Standards, and the National Construction Code". This emphasises the need for training to be practically relevant and compliant with established benchmarks, ensuring the quality and safety of work in the industry.

6.5.2 Strong belief in training's broader impact

Stakeholders expressed a strong conviction that investment in construction industry training extends beyond immediate skills development. Quantitative feedback from the survey (Figure 10 below) revealed that the perception was that training has a "very high impact" (54%) or "significant impact" (28 %) on the ACT Government's broader economic and social goals. This highlights recognition of the industry's role in the broader economy and community well-being.



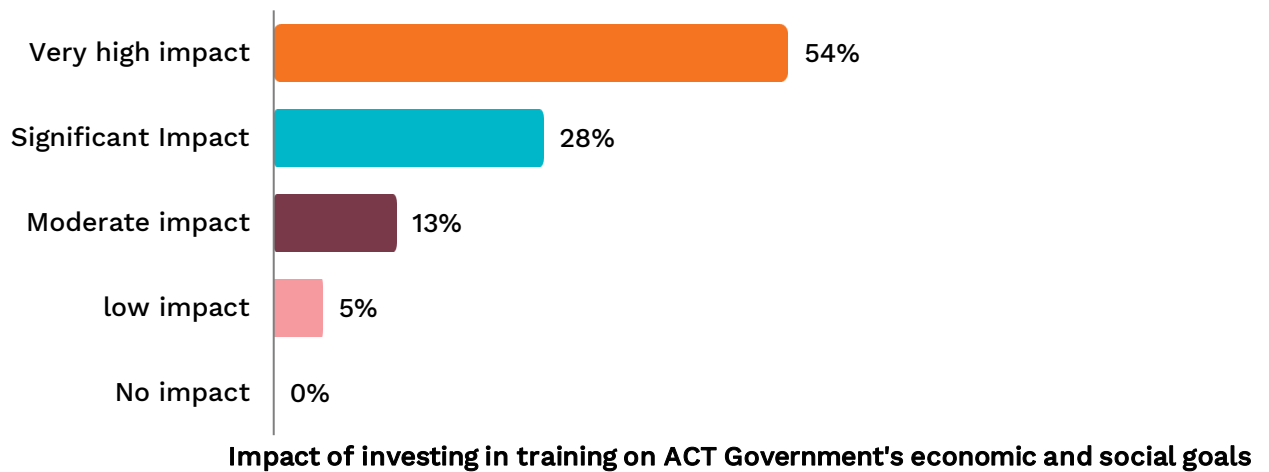


Figure 10 - Survey results training impact on ACT Government's broader economic and social goals

6.5.3 Alignment with government procurement mandates

The research reveals emerging government compliance requirements. Qualitative feedback indicated an "increasing emphasis on training to meet government procurement requirements, such as the Cultural Standard and Health and Wellbeing Framework". This creates a specific need for training, "often non-accredited", in these areas, demonstrating a shift towards valuing broader workplace standards.

6.6 Emergent issues / additional key themes

Beyond the main research objectives, several noteworthy themes came up during engagement. These offer important strategic insights for the TFA and the wider industry. Though not initially part of the scope, they are important for understanding the industry's training challenges.

6.6.1 TFA's mandate and funding model challenges

Concerns were raised about the TFA's strategic direction and funding limits. A core question was whether the TFA's main goal is only to upskill current workers or also to build a pipeline of new workers, especially those facing barriers. This has big implications for TFA funding and program design. This links to the TFA's perceived "legislative limitation to primarily fund accredited training through RTOs". This limit is seen as "hindering support for valuable non-accredited cultural training, mental health initiatives, or pre-employment programs run by non-RTOs", even if these align with government priorities. While in fact the TFA is not restricted to accredited training, it is limited to training delivered by RTOs.

6.6.2 Perception and status of trades

Societal views, often favouring university education, were seen as possibly "detering entry into trades". The industry needs to work to make itself "more attractive as a viable and rewarding career path" to help recruitment.

6.6.3 Role of licensing in quality and training

The limited number of licensed trades in the ACT (plumbing, gas fitting, electrical) was seen as "contributing to lower standards and quality in unlicensed trades", as the ACT licensing requirements do not require full apprenticeships to work in a number of trade areas. There was "advocacy for broader trade licensing (e.g. waterproofing, tiling, carpentry)", suggesting a link between licensing and training quality.



6.6.4 Training cost implications on housing affordability

A broader issue was that "costs of mandatory training and other industry burdens (e.g. high workers' compensation costs in the ACT)" are often "passed on to consumers, contributing to higher housing costs". This highlights the wider economic effect of industry costs.

6.7 Alignment and gaps between desktop research and engagement

The research found strong agreement between general trends from the desktop research and specific concerns from ACT stakeholders. The prominence of themes in qualitative feedback clearly reinforces industry priorities.

- **Skills gaps:** Desktop research often highlights national trade skill shortages. This matched engagement findings, where "Significant shortage in core trade skills" was the most common theme, expressed frequently and rated as the top priority in qualitative feedback. This suggests the ACT's situation mirrors wider Australian trends.
- **Future skills:** The focus on "Sustainability and green building skills" and the vital need for "Upskilling existing workers" from engagement with stakeholders, aligns perfectly with global and national reports on industry transformation found in the desktop research. Qualitative insights further detailed specific technologies (e.g. hydrogen for plumbers) and local factors (e.g. government net-zero goals, housing commitments, expected civil works boom), adding detailed context to broad trends.
- **Training quality and workforce inclusivity:** The desktop research highlights general issues in training quality and diversity barriers in male-dominated industries. Interview and workshop feedback also supported this view, with strong qualitative feedback on the desire for "real" training and the widespread "Industry culture" as a barrier. While desktop research gives context, qualitative data highlights real experiences and serious impact, like the "72% dropout rate for female apprentices," indicating these are clear ACT sector priorities. The emphasis on the "Interconnectedness of attraction, retention, and culture" in engagement further deepens this, showing cultural inclusion is key to workforce supply.
- **Alignment with priorities:** The strong support from both survey data and qualitative feedback for the "Crucial importance of industry standard alignment" and "Strong belief in training's broader impact" confirms policy directions often discussed in government and industry reports. This shows a shared understanding and relevance between strategic goals and on-the-ground views.

6.7.1 Gaps and emergent insights

While broad themes aligned, engagement also brought up key local or nuanced issues less prominent in general desktop research:

- The combined theme of "TFA's mandate and funding model challenges" (covering strategic goals, legal limits, and market impact) is very important for the TFA's operational planning. These are critical for the TFA's planning but less likely to be detailed in general industry reports.
- The "Critical need for employer education" was expressed with strong feeling by stakeholders. This relates to a perceived demand for employer training (especially tier twos, sub-contractors, and smaller businesses) on topics including fostering positive workplace culture, improving retention, and valuing diversity. Desktop research on small business support programs and HR best practices in construction often identifies a need for greater employer capacity building in these areas.
- "Data deficiencies in ACT workforce" (though mainly from desktop review, as noted in future research recommendations) remains a strategic necessity for effective planning and evaluation. It shows a lack of local data for targeted actions.



- General labour market shortages in the sector are not reflected in the ACT, where the supply of workers currently outstrips available jobs, although this is expected to change with the increase in capital works.



7. Recommendations

7.1 TFA funding for training and support for delivery

These recommendations cover areas relevant to the delivery of the 2026 Training Plan within the current remit of the TFA.

7.1.1 Fund core trade and future ready skills

- Prioritise and increase funding for accredited training programs that directly address critical shortages in core trades where user choice funding is not provided (e.g. plumbing, electrical, carpentry, tiling, plastering, painting, roof plumbing, and concreting),
- Fund RTOs in delivering enhanced training modules for foundational knowledge, including practical application of the National Construction Code and Australian Standards.
- Actively fund accredited training programs that prepare the workforce for new demands in sustainability and green building practices (e.g. solar installation, energy efficiency audits), digital literacy (including Building Information Modelling (BIM), digital twins, and data management software), and specific new technologies (e.g. hydrogen technology for plumbers and electricians).
- Support specialised licence and 'ticket' training needed for the coming civil works boom, such as advanced machinery operation.

7.1.2 Enhance quality and relevance of funded training

- Set funding criteria that encourage RTOs to deliver more "real," practical, and face-to-face training. Use current industry professionals where suitable.
- Participate in industry forums and provide feedback to RTOs regarding training needs of the ACT building and construction industry to ensure curriculum updates directly match current industry best practices and employer needs.
- Fund RTOs to deliver enhanced training modules for foundational knowledge, including practical application of the National Construction Code and Australian Standards.

7.1.3 Fund direct access and support initiatives

- Continue to fund programs to ease direct financial burdens for new entrants, such as rebates for mandatory entry-level safety training (white card, silica awareness, asbestos awareness, WSWACM, PPE).
- Fund digital literacy training within funded programs to help those struggling with online learning, ensuring wider access.

7.1.4 Promote positive industry culture and perception

- Use TFA's platform and partnerships to promote and support industry-wide cultural change initiatives aimed at combating exclusionary workplace cultures.
- Work with industry groups and ACT Government to improve how trades are perceived as attractive careers, challenging traditional views favouring university education.
- Support the development and sharing of resources for employers on building positive workplace culture, improving retention, and valuing diversity.



7.2 Key research findings for broader industry and government consideration

The research identified several critical systemic issues and opportunities that are vital for the long-term health of the ACT construction industry. While acting on these findings may fall outside TFA's current legislative mandate, they are presented here as an evidence base to inform policy discussions and the ongoing legislative review.

7.2.1 Barriers to workforce inclusion require policy-level solutions

- The research indicates that the 'mature-age apprentice disadvantage' remains a significant barrier. Policy changes or incentives, such as tailored wage subsidies, are needed to support their participation.
- The complexity and cost of recognising overseas qualifications was consistently identified as a barrier for skilled migrants. Streamlining this process presents a key opportunity to address workforce shortages.

7.2.2 The need for improved, ACT-specific industry data

- A significant gap exists in reliable, local data on the ACT construction workforce, including skills, demographics, and attrition rates. Addressing this gap will be essential for a comprehensive study is critical for effective planning.
- Robust, local data is essential for precise planning, targeted training investment, and effective measurement of program impacts across the industry.

7.2.3 The regulatory environment impacts industry health and training quality

- Systemic issues such as the high cost of workers' compensation were raised as impacting industry competitiveness and housing affordability, which in turn affects training investment.
- There is industry support for considering an expansion of licensed trades in the ACT (e.g., waterproofing, tiling, carpentry) to boost quality standards and create more comprehensive, formalised training pathways.

7.2.4 Industry requires flexibility beyond accredited training

- There is a strong industry need for greater flexibility in funding relevant programs delivered by non-accredited providers (e.g., mental health first aid, cultural awareness, pre-employment programs) that are vital for overall workforce wellbeing and retention.
- The current legislative framework limits TFA's ability to fund programs delivered by non-accredited providers. This finding is particularly relevant for the legislative review, which could explore new ways to allow the TFA to support non-RTO delivered training.



7.3 The 2026 Training Plan priorities

A decision matrix was used to identify specific training areas in order of priority, based on the feedback received through the three engagement activities. The matrix draws on pre agreed and weighted criteria ('core influencing factors') which were updated to incorporate feedback from the research. The predominant themes (as described in Section 6) for TFA's 2026 training focus were rated using a consistent scale against the core influencing factors (CIF). This process supports a uniform selection process and reduces the subjective biases that may affect the final training prioritisation.

The CIF which are more heavily weighted reflect the importance of what the workforce and the ACT government consider priorities. Additional criteria capture the need for training to be agile, to stay relevant and adaptive to shifting needs and standards.



Training options decision matrix

Core influencing factor (CIF)	Weighted rating	ACT mandatory training		Core trade		Specialised trade		Sustainability and green building		High risk ticketed training		Digital literacy and emerging technology		Foundational knowledge	
		Rating	Weighted rating x rating	Rating	Weighted rating x rating	Rating	Weighted rating x rating	Rating	Weighted rating x rating	Rating	Weighted rating x rating	Rating	Weighted rating x rating	Rating	Weighted rating x rating
Training need identified across two or more engagement activities	5	2	10	2	10	2	10	2	10	2	10	2	10	1	5
Training need identified by key informants (sector experts)	4	2	8	2	8	2	8	1	4	2	8	1	4	1	4
Training need identified by /for key emerging workforce cohorts	3	2	6	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	3
Training identified aligns with ACT government priorities for building and construction industry	3	2	6	2	6	2	6	2	6	2	6	1	3	1	3
Training identified increases interest and/or retention of apprentices	2	2	4	2	4	2	4	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2
Training identified supports future innovation	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	1	1
Training supports upskilling/reskilling	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1
Training delivery supports quality standards and relevance	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Total value		14	38	14	34	14	34	13	31	12	31	11	25	9	21

CF Key: 1–5
5 = highest influence weight

Rating scale
0 – doesn't meet CIF 1 – somewhat meets CIF 2 – meets CIF

Table 2 – Decisions matrix

8. TFA 2026 Training Plan outline

This section details how the insights derived from this research can directly inform the structure and content of the 2026 Training Plan. By integrating our findings, the TFA can develop a plan that is highly responsive to current sector needs, anticipates future demands, and strategically aligns with broader industry and government objectives.

8.1 Executive Summary integration and mandate reinforcement

The Introduction of the 2026 Training Plan should clearly articulate the TFA's mandate and the established annual training plan identification process. This section could draw directly from the Executive Summary of this research report, highlighting:

- **TFA's core role:** Reiterate the TFA's mission in building a skilled building and construction workforce.
- **Strategic context:** Briefly explain how the annual training plan aligns with the TFA's broader strategic goals.
- Include the snapshot of research finding for quick reference:

Shaping the future workforce Identifying key training needs for 2026 and beyond

Current and future training and development needs within the ACT Building and Construction Industry for the ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority's (TFA) 2026 Training Plan.



ACT
Government



PRIORITY AREA FOR TRAINING NEEDS

Persistent skills gaps

Critical shortage in core trades (plumbing, electrical, carpentry) and foundational knowledge

- 65% of survey respondents concerned about skilled worker availability.

Future skills needs and upskilling

Demand for sustainability/ green building skills and crucial need to upskill existing workers in new technologies

Effectiveness, innovation, and inclusivity of training

Mixed satisfaction with current training; strong call for practical, industry-led, flexible delivery. Major barriers to participation and diversity (high costs, cultural issues, migrant recognition)

Alignment with industry and government priorities

Ensuring training programs rigorously match industry standards, the National Construction Code, and government procurement mandates

Emergent issues and strategic challenges

TFA faces mandate/funding model constraints (RTO-accredited focus, market impact), and broader challenges like employer education and perception of trades

OTHER CORE PRIORITIES

28% CURRENT SKILLS GAP IDENTIFICATION



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Address core skills gaps: fund accredited training for critical trade shortages (e.g. plumbing, electrical, carpentry) and essential foundational knowledge like the national construction codes.

Prepare for future demands: invest in accredited programs for sustainable building, green practices, digital literacy and new technologies

Support civil works boom: fund specialised licenses and machinery operation training for the anticipated civil works demand.

Ease financial barriers: provide rebates for mandatory entry-level safety training to reduce costs for new entrants.

Enhance digital access: fund digital literacy training within programs to improve accessibility for online learning.

Promote practical training: encourage registered training organisations to deliver practical, industry-led, face-to-face training with current professionals, moving beyond 'tick-box exercises'.

Align curriculum with industry: work with training organisations and industry to update curriculum to match current best practices and employer needs.

8.2 Research methodology

A concise summary of the research process undertaken for the 2026 Training Plan will establish the credibility and robustness of the insights guiding the plan's development. This should include:

- The scope and reach of the research, emphasising the engagement, noting the three engagement activities with 60 participants from across the sector, highlighting the breadth and depth of input gathered.
- The key focus areas, clearly stating the research's focus on "current skills gaps, future and emerging needs, and effective training approaches." This immediately frames the subsequent content of the Training Plan.
- Include qualitative insights, core quotes gathered from the research are included in this report and could be reflected in the 2026 Training Plan to provide valuable context and humanise the data, demonstrating the genuine perspectives gathered. Consider including a "Sample of participation feedback from workshops" here, ensuring it visually reinforces the engagement. Example below:



- Highlight that "participants were engaged and provided honest perspectives," underscoring the reliability of the collected data.

8.3 High-level findings

The high-level findings are the core of the research and could directly translate into the thematic structure of the 2026 Training Plan. This section should clearly present the key workforce priorities and stakeholder insights, emphasising their direct relevance to training initiatives. Below is a summary of the high-level findings from this report:

Table 3 – Summary of findings

Focus area	Feedback and research findings
Persistent skills gaps	• There's a lack of skilled workers in core trades (e.g., plumbing, electrical, carpentry). • Gaps also exist in basic knowledge (like National Construction Code application) and higher-level supervisory and project management skills. • Getting specific high-risk work licences and filling other specialist skill gaps are also challenges.
Evolving future needs and upskilling	• The industry expects high demand for skills in sustainable building and new technologies. These include green practices and digital proficiency (e.g., BIM, AI). • There's a strong need to upskill current workers. A coming civil works boom will also require specific machinery operation skills.
Training effectiveness and participation barriers:	• Satisfaction with current training varies. • There is strong demand for practical, industry-led, and flexible training, moving away from purely theoretical or 'tick-box' approaches.



Focus area	Feedback and research findings
Alignment with industry and government priorities	- There's broad agreement that training must align with industry standards and ACT Government priorities. These include procurement rules (e.g., Cultural Standard, Health and Wellbeing Framework). - Stakeholders believe training greatly helps achieve broader ACT economic and social goals.
Other emergent issues and TFA strategic challenges	- Key issues for the TFA involve clarifying its core role (pipeline building versus upskilling). - Limits in legislation and funding, were also noted, especially for relevant programs delivered by non-accredited providers. Market downturns also reduce levy income. - Issues around employee education in areas such as workplace culture also emerged. - Concerns were raised about how trades are perceived in society, the role of broader licensing in quality, and training costs impacts on housing affordability.

8.3.1 Training Plan implications

Below is a proposed structure for the 2026 Training Plan sections, informed by findings, matching the finding to a direct action or inclusion in the 2026 Training Plan. Suggested 'Training Plan implications' are suggestions only and will need to be informed by actual training plan contents:

Addressing persistent skills gaps Finding: Shortages in core trades, basic knowledge (NCC), supervisory, project management, and specialist high-risk work skills. Training Plan implication: The plan should prioritise and promote rebates for training that addresses these specific deficits. This includes communicating rebate support for critical trade qualifications, NCC application, and higher-level supervisory skills to RTOs and employers. Preparing for evolving future needs and upskilling	Enhancing training participation Finding: Varied satisfaction, demand call for practical, industry-led, and flexible training, moving from 'tick-box' approaches. Training Plan implication: The plan should outline how the TFA can promote wider participation in industry training. This includes working with RTOs and employers to improve training outcomes and reduce participation barriers.
Strategic alignment with industry and government priorities Finding: Strong agreement that training must align with industry standards and ACT Government priorities (e.g., procurement rules, social goals). Training Plan implication: The plan should explicitly detail how TFA will direct its funding to support broader ACT Government objectives and industry standards. This includes promoting or increasing rebates for training that embeds modules on good workplace culture, safety, and ethical practices, or meets specific ACT Government procurement requirements.	Addressing emergent issues and TFA strategic challenges Finding: TFA role clarity (pipeline vs. upskilling), legislative/funding limits (non-accredited training), market downturn impact, and need to educate employers on culture, perception of trades, licensing, and training costs. Training Plan implication: The plan should acknowledge the implications of legislative and funding limitations for funding flexibility, particularly concerning non-accredited training. The plan should also outline how TFA can engage with employers on critical issues (culture, perception of trades, licensing, and training costs) to create a more receptive environment for training uptake, potentially through collaborative efforts.



8.4 High level recommendations

Based on these findings, this report recommends that the ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority and industry stakeholders focus on the following:

Table 4 - Summary of recommendations

Recommendations	
Prioritising core skills and future readiness	• Direct funding to close current trade skill gaps and improve basic knowledge. • Support upskilling existing workers in vital future areas like sustainability, digital proficiency, and new technologies.
Enhancing training quality and relevance	• Work with RTOs to fund practical, flexible, and industry-led training. • Support RTOs in delivering enhanced training modules for foundational knowledge, including practical application of the National Construction Code and Australian Standards.
Improving access and inclusivity	• Use funding and participation with industry to lower barriers to entry and help create a welcoming industry culture. • Participate in discussions on policy changes that link training to wider industry and ACT Government goals. This includes addressing funding limits and clarifying the TFA's overall mission.
Promote positive industry culture and perception	• Work with industry groups and the ACT Government to improve the perception of trades as attractive careers, challenging traditional views favouring university education. • Support the development and sharing of resources for employers on building positive workplace culture, improving retention, and valuing diversity.

These recommendations serve as direct actions for the TFA to consider implementing within its training funding framework and strategic influencing efforts, leveraging research findings to achieve desired outcomes.

8.4.1 Training Plan implications

Below are some examples of how they could be considered and included. As above, these are suggestions only and will need to be informed by actual training plan contents.

Prioritising core skills and future readiness Recommendation: Direct funding to close current trade skill gaps, improve basic knowledge, and support upskilling in vital future areas (sustainability, digital proficiency, new technologies). Training Plan implication: The plan should detail how TFA will adjust funding structure and promotions to incentivise training for core skill gaps (e.g. increased rebates for specific apprenticeships, NCC courses) and for critical future areas (sustainable building, BIM, AI).	Enhancing training quality and relevance Recommendation: Work with RTOs to fund practical, flexible, industry-led training; use funding/advocacy to lower barriers and create welcoming culture. Training Plan implication: The plan should specify how TFA will engage RTOs and employers to communicate preferred training delivery models, refining rebate eligibility criteria to favour programs demonstrating practicality, flexibility, and industry leadership. It should also detail initiatives aimed at reducing training barriers and fostering inclusive culture through information sharing and collaboration.
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Improving access and inclusivity

Recommendation: Aligning training to wider industry/ACT Government goals, including confirming funding limits and clarifying TFA's mission.

Training Plan implication: The plan should detail how TFA will design and promote funding structure specifically to improve access for underrepresented groups or address access to training barriers. This includes informing relevant stakeholders about the potential benefits of policy adjustments to broaden rebate eligibility and enhance inclusivity.

Boosting industry capacity and data

Recommendation: Support efforts to educate employers on retaining staff and fostering positive culture; invest in local workforce data for better planning.

Training Plan implication: The plan should outline how TFA will leverage communication channels and partnerships to support employers in staff retention and positive culture, even if not directly funding these (e.g. by sharing of best practice resources, highlighting benefits of training). Crucially, it will commit to investing in and utilising robust local workforce data to inform future rebate allocation decisions and strategic planning, ensuring maximum impact.



Appendix A – Workshop summary

The following summarises the feedback from two workshops conducted as part of the research project'. The workshops gathered detailed perspectives from Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and Industry Representatives on skills gaps, future needs, and priorities for the TFA.

Representatives from the following organisations attended the workshops.

- ACT Education Directorate
- Alertforce
- Australian Training Company (ATC)
- Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) - Trade Skills
- Creative Safety Initiatives (CSI)
- Construction Charitable Works (CCW)
- Electrogrouop
- Foresti Industries
- Infrastructure Canberra
- Master Builders Association of the ACT
- Orbus3
- WorkSafe ACT

Across both workshops, a clear consensus emerged on the critical role of TFA funding in addressing foundational barriers to entry and retention in the ACT construction industry. The high cost of mandatory safety training (particularly for silica and asbestos awareness training) was identified as the single biggest hurdle for new entrants, apprentices, and small businesses. Stakeholders strongly recommended that the TFA prioritise funding for this entry-level training to ensure a steady pipeline of workers.

Beyond foundational skills, there was a significant focus on the need for training to improve industry culture, support diversity and inclusion, and upskill the existing workforce to aid retention and adapt to future challenges.

Key themes and findings

Foundational and entry-level training is the top priority

- Both RTOs and industry representatives emphatically agreed that TFA funding has the most significant impact at the "Starting Out and Early Career" stage.
- High cost as a barrier was a recurrent topic: The cost of essential pre-employment qualifications—such as the construction induction white card, silica awareness, and asbestos awareness—was repeatedly mentioned as a major challenge for new entrants and apprentices, who often cannot afford it before starting on-site.
- Small business owners described TFA funding as "absolutely essential" to afford this mandatory training, especially given issues with staff retention where they might invest hundreds of dollars in a new employee who leaves after a few months.

Safety training as a core function

- Safety-related training was consistently highlighted as a critical area for funding, not just for compliance but for its positive impact on productivity.
- Key courses suggested included silica awareness (noted as being particularly expensive), asbestos awareness, and working safely at heights were the most frequently mentioned courses.



Improving industry culture, retention, and diversity

- A strong theme emerged around the need for "softer" skills training to create a more inclusive, supportive, and modern workplace, which is seen as crucial for retention and attracting a more diverse workforce.
- Stakeholders from both groups called for funding for:
 - Gender diversity, anti-bullying, and respectful workplace behaviour training.
 - First Nations and general cultural awareness training.
 - Mental health and wellbeing initiatives, such as the "Healthy Tradie project."
- RTOs, in particular identified "Address barriers to work for females" as a high-priority area (71%).

Upskilling, specialisation, and career progression

- While entry-level training was the top priority, stakeholders also saw value in funding for upskilling the existing workforce to improve retention, job satisfaction, and business capability.
- Key areas included training for trade specialisation (e.g., crane operator, licenced scaffolder), leadership and project management (e.g., Cert IV WHS, site supervisor), and business ownership skills (e.g., tendering, financial management).
- One RTO noted that Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) will be a "huge area which will require funding" as workers transition into supervisory roles.
- There were suggestions from stakeholders to expand the trade licensing system in the ACT.

Stakeholder-specific priorities (from activity 3 data)

The prioritisation activity revealed clear areas of focus for each stakeholder group:

- **RTOs:** Overwhelmingly prioritised funding flexibility (89%) and addressing why apprentices are not completing their trade (100%). This reflects their position at the front line of training delivery and administration.
- **Industry representatives:** Showed the strongest interest in skilled migrant integration (50%), a priority not as highly rated by other groups.
- **Employees:** Were most focused on support for mature-age and diverse entrants (63%).
- **Employers:** Aligned with the overall theme, prioritising improved training access (cost and pathway barriers) (33%) and addressing foundational trade skill gaps (25%).

Primary challenges identified

- **For RTOs:** The main challenge is delivering meaningful training (especially for white cards) while dealing with the high costs of mandatory training courses owned privately. They also noted the ACT's over-reliance on subcontractors from other states.
- **For industry representatives:** Key challenges include finding local providers for relevant courses, navigating the TFA process and keeping up with changes from bodies like BuildSkills Australia.



Appendix B - List of references

The following list of resources was referred to for the desktop review:

1. ACT Government <https://www.act.gov.au/skills/skilled-to-succeed>
1. ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies [https://www.bsss.act.edu.au/Office for Women](https://www.bsss.act.edu.au/Office%20for%20Women)
<https://www.act.gov.au/directorates-and-agencies/health-and-community-services-directorate/office-for-women>
2. Canberra Institute of Technology <https://cit.edu.au/>
3. Master Builders ACT The Building and Construction Industry workforce Report July 2024; Building and construction industry forecasts Australia September 2024
<https://masterbuilders.com.au/the-future-of-the-workforce-the-building-and-construction-industry/>
4. BuildSkills Australia <https://buildskills.com.au/>
5. Oxford Economic Australia Future of construction in Australia
<https://www.oxfordeconomics.com/country/australia/>
6. Access Group update <https://www.accessgroup.net.au/>
7. Coates update <https://www.coates.com.au/>
8. Tremco update <https://www.tremco.com.au/>
9. WorkSafe ACT website <https://www.worksafe.act.gov.au/>
10. National Association of Women in Construction (NAWIC) website <https://www.nawic.com.au/>
11. Australian Construction Industry Forum (ACIF) *November 2024 forecast* <https://www.acif.com.au/>

