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# Workers' Safety and Compensation Commission Northwest Territories and Nunavut

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## Executive Summary

The Safe Workplace program was developed on the premise that WSCC stakeholders, namely registered employers, would be part of the process to ensure its relevancy and timeliness with employers' needs. Also, it is expected that stakeholders will be more engaged, once the Safe Workplace program rolls out, having been part of the development process.

The overall goal of the engagement was to include the voices from a diverse population of stakeholders from a variety of industries and regions in Northwest Territories and Nunavut, as well as representing a variety of sizes based on number of employees. In addition, the pre-set outcomes of the engagement included stakeholder awareness, learning about OHS challenges, and gaining support, all of which were accomplished.

The majority of feedback is supportive of the Safe Workplace program as proposed through the discussion paper and suggestions from stakeholders are in line with the developmental direction of the Program. This engagement was a success and it is recommended that regular engagements are held as the development of the Safe Workplace program continues.

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## Introduction

### Safe Workplace Development and Stakeholder Engagement

The Safe Workplace program was developed on the premise that stakeholders would be part of the process, particularly in the development of incentives for employers. Stakeholders range in their workplace needs and these needs may change over time. It is important for the success of Safe Workplace that the program remains flexible to change where incentives can be added, amended, or replaced over time, as needed. In order to stay current and relevant, stakeholder engagement is essential.

The criteria to be deemed a Safe Workplace includes the combination of WSCC requirements that employers are currently obligated to meet. This Program does not demand anything new. However, the program aims to support stakeholders to more actively work to achieve these WSCC obligations through incentives, while advancing their OHS programming and safety culture. By participating in the development of Safe Workplace, it is expected that stakeholders will take ownership of the program and be more engaged having been part of the decision-making process.

### Purpose and Outcomes of Engagement

The purpose of this stakeholder engagement project was to undertake public outreach regarding the new incentive program for workplace health and safety. This new program, *Safe Workplace*, will provide incentives that could motivate and support employers to advance their workplace safety culture.

The stakeholder engagement process ran from July 26<sup>th</sup> through August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The overall goal of the engagement was to include the voices from a diverse population of stakeholders from a variety of industries and regions in Northwest Territories and Nunavut, as well as representing a variety of sizes based on number of employees.

The desired outcomes for this stakeholder engagement include:

- Gaining support for the Safe Workplace program from a diverse range of stakeholders
- Learning about what would make it easier for stakeholders to advance their safety culture and OHS programs
- Creating awareness of the new Safe Workplace program, so stakeholders know what to expect in coming year.

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## Scope of the Engagement

This engagement aimed to collect information on what stakeholders think about the proposed Safe Workplaces program and incentives, as well as collecting information on the respondents' demographics, and OHS programming needs. Stakeholder critique on the criteria and the onset of the Safe Workplace program were not a part of this engagement.

## Application of Stakeholder Feedback

Feedback obtained from this engagement will inform the development of incentives of the Safe Workplace program.

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## Methodology

The foundation of this engagement was to involve a diverse grouping of stakeholders in the development process of Safe Workplace incentives. Effort was made to include all sizes of employer, from all types of industry, and from all regions in the two territories. These efforts of diversity and inclusion were to ensure that all voices were given a chance to be heard in the development of the Safe Workplace program.

The focus of this engagement was a discussion paper that outline the proposed program. Stakeholders were able to read the discussion paper or a summary of the paper in order to learn about the background and objectives of program. They were able to give feedback on proposed incentives through an online survey, virtual sessions, and one-on-one discussions.

### Methods

Between July 26<sup>th</sup> and August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021, 254 companies were contacted directly, through telephone call or email, to invite them to participate in the engagement. Those contacted were emailed a link to the Safe Workplace webpage and informed they could learn about the new program in a discussion paper and a summary of this paper, located on this webpage. This email also included the request to complete an online survey and gave other ways to engage in the form of virtual meetings and one-on-one conversations with program officers.

Included in this number of employers contacted are the 51 COR certified organizations that were contacted directly by the Northern Safety Association. COR certified organizations will be instrumental in being involved in the Safe Workplace program because of their demonstrated expertise in OHS programming and implementation. Knowing how to engage this group through the Safe Workplace program is important to enhance collaboration in their mentoring of companies that are in earlier stages of OHS program development and implementation.

During this engagement period, website statistics were tracked to understand whether the online Safe Workplace stakeholder engagement information was being accessed. As a result of this tracking, it was found that during the stakeholder engagement period of July 26<sup>th</sup> to August 13<sup>th</sup> there were 455 views and 355 unique views on the Safe Workplace webpage. This is notable as only 254 stakeholders were directly sent this webpage link. Other outreach for this webpage included social media posts, WSCC's monthly newsletter *SafetyNet* and a webpage header on the WSCC homepage directing users to the information page and survey. During this period, the average time on the page was approximately five minutes, which is more than double the average time spent on the overall WSCC website.



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## **Online Survey**

An online survey was developed using SurveyMonkey and was available to stakeholders from July 26<sup>th</sup> through August 13<sup>th</sup>. This survey was available in English, French, and Inuktitut and included 14 questions. The survey questions asked for the stakeholder's demographic information, such as industry, location, the company role of the person filling in the survey, as well as their opinion on the proposed Safe Workplace program incentives. Average time taken to complete the survey was eight minutes. The survey questions are located in the appendices.

## **One-on-one discussions**

One of the questions in the online survey asked respondents if they would like to discuss this program one-on-one with a program officer. Six respondents said they would like to be contacted and included their contact information. However, none of these stakeholders responded to the follow up for a one-on-one discussion.

## **Virtual Meetings**

Six virtual meetings were scheduled with two per afternoon on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup>. Zoom was used as the platform for these meetings; three were attended with a total of 5 participants. The participants were mainly in attendance to learn more about the program and did not have any specific questions or concerns. A summary of comments from those who attended these meetings is located in the appendices.

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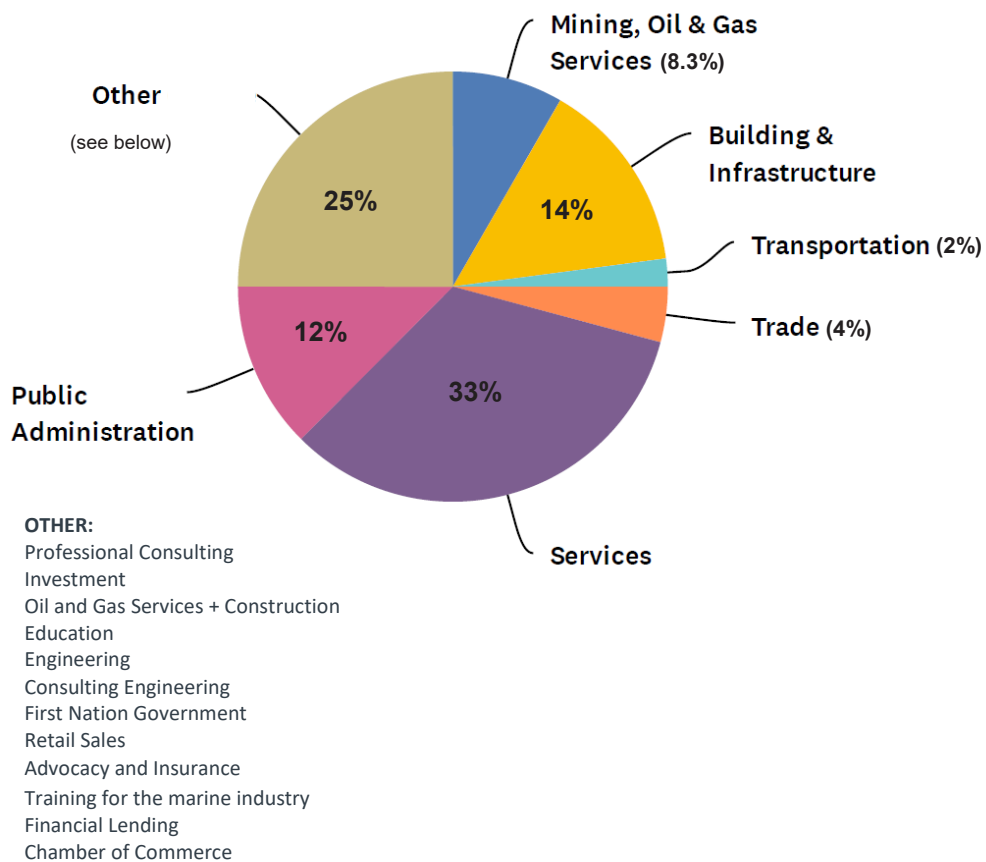
## Who are the Respondents

As a result of the engagement, 50 surveys were completed and the following is an outline of who the respondents' demographics. Each of these demographic characteristics will help in making Safe Workplace relevant across stakeholders.

### Industry

In what industry does your organization operate?

The type of an employer's industry may impact the type of challenges faced in advancing OHS programming and implementation.

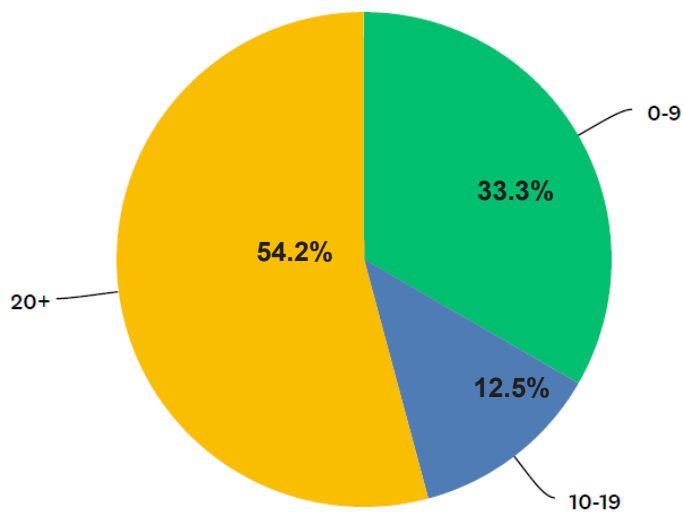


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## Number of Employees

How many people work at your organization?

The number of employees in an organization might suggest the breadth of OHS needs and requirements. There are also legislative differences for companies with less than or 20 and more employees.

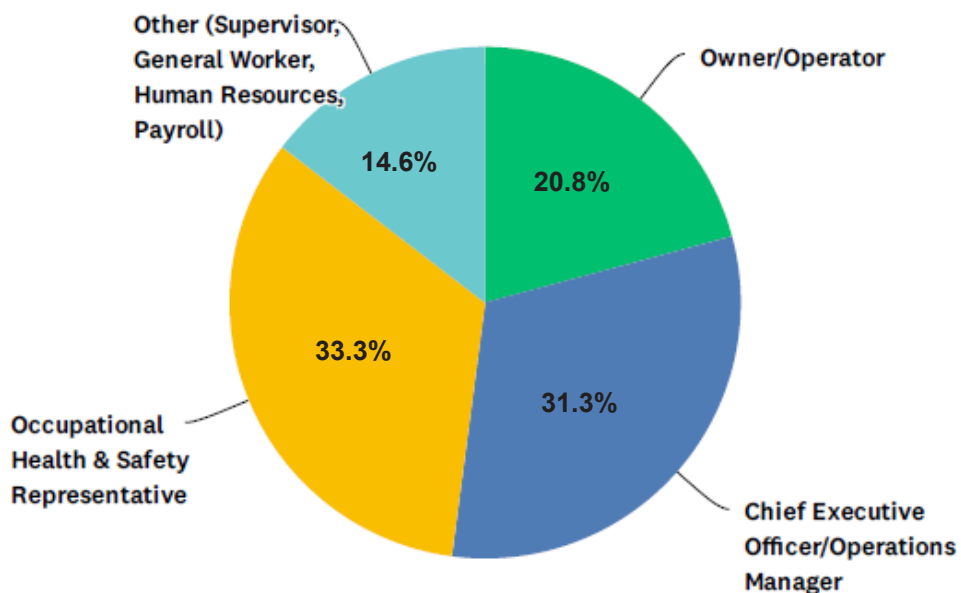


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## Role

What is your role at your workplace?

A respondent's role in the company may affect the decision-making power they have around OHS improvements and advancements. Reaching a mix of OHS experts and decision-makers may help make Safe Workplace successful across organizations. OHS experts can recommend relevant and timely incentives as well as commenting on OHS program challenges, whereas decision-makers decide whether OHS advancement is a priority.

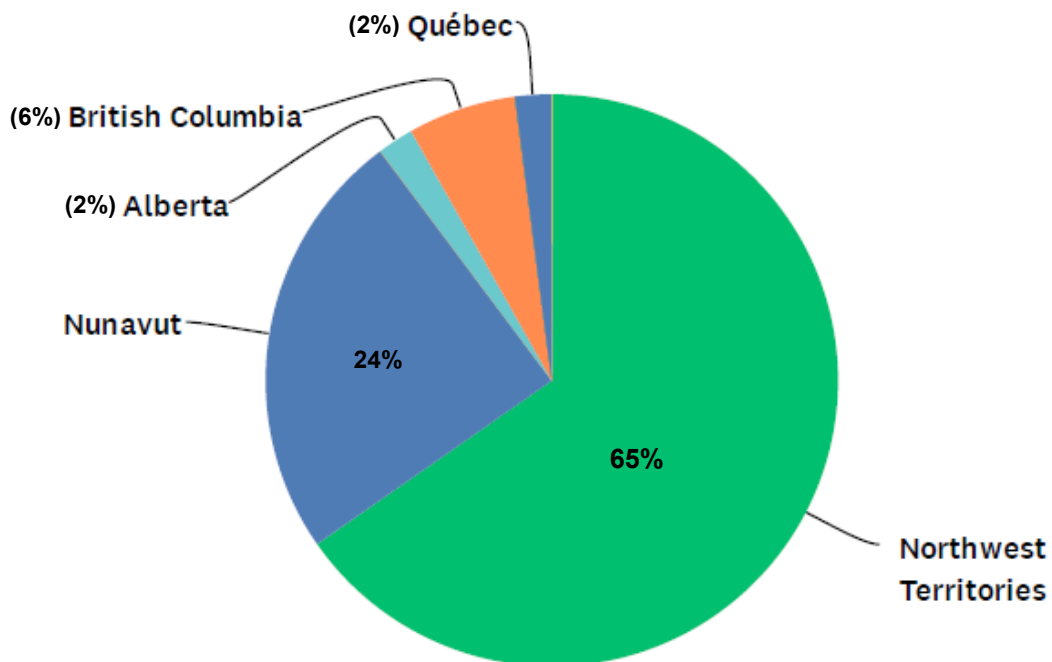


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## Region

In which territory or province are you primarily located?

Different regions in the two territories face different workplace and work environment challenges. Safe Workplace development needs to be flexible to support a variety of OHS programming situations.



- If located in the Northwest Territories or Nunavut, please list the community where you are primarily located: (42 responses)
  - Fort Liard – 1
  - Fort MacPherson – 1
  - Fort Providence – 1
  - Fort Smith – 1
  - Hay River – 2
  - Inuvik – 2
  - Iqaluit – 8
  - Paulatuk – 1
  - Pond Inlet – 1
  - Rankin Inlet – 2
  - Yellowknife, NT – 22

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## Current Safety Culture

Respondents reported an understanding of safety culture and importance of workplace safety. The majority believe that safety is important for a company's success, is affordable, and that injuries are preventable. One area of improvement may be to help companies realize the importance of positive reinforcement in strengthening safety culture and preventing injuries.

### 1) As an employer, I know my responsibilities for workplace safety:

Disagree – 2%      Agree – 35%      Strongly Agree – 63%

### 2) My workplace considers safety to be at least as important as productivity and quality of work:

Disagree – 8%      Neither – 8%      Agree – 35%      Strongly Agree 49%

### 3) Workplace safety is important for a company to be successful:

Disagree – 4%      Neither – 2%      Agree – 27%      Strongly Agree – 67%

### 4) Businesses cannot bear the cost of following all safety procedures:

Strongly Disagree – 20%      Agree – 14%  
Disagree – 43%      Strongly Agree – 6%  
Neither – 14%

### 5) Workplace injuries are preventable:

Agree – 57%      Strongly Agree – 43%

### 6) Those who act safely in the workplace receive positive recognition:

Disagree – 6%      Neither – 25%      Agree – 49%      Strongly Agree – 20%

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## What We Heard

### Summary

A total of 50 online surveys were completed and 5 individuals attended the virtual meetings. Only responses that are within the scope of this engagement are included in the section below.

### Views on the Program Proposal

Responses on the program proposal were evenly mixed. About half the respondents in this open-answer survey question said they agreed with the proposed program and thought it is good to provide positive reinforcement to get employers involved in advancing OHS.

Respondents who did not agree with the proposed incentives said they would appreciate financial rebates and did not see the value of Safe Workplace Certificate or a “piece of paper.” They also cited that winning contracts is the highest priority and current procurement practices do not acknowledge safety practices or safety records. Winning bids are won on lowest cost, not on safety records. Other concerns included that Nunavut does not have access to all the tools and resources that Northwest Territories and that the Northern Safety Association does not have a presence of support in Nunavut.

There were also comments about Safe Workplace’s recognition of COR (Certificate of Recognition) as an accredited OHS program. They cited “dealing with the administrators of COR quite challenging,” and also wanted recognition for ISO 14002-2018 and COR from other jurisdictions.

### Views on Proposed Incentives

When asked to rank the proposed Safe Workplace incentives of Events, Training, Roundtables, and Recognition, the majority of respondents were in favour of training by WSCC partners at 64%, followed by recognition by WSCC as being a Safe Workplace at 22%.

	1	2	3	4	TOTAL
Health & Safety Tradeshows, Expos, and Networking Events	10.64%	21.28%	23.40%	44.68%	
	5	10	11	21	47
Safety Training Offered by WSCC Partners	63.83%	27.66%	6.38%	2.13%	
	30	13	3	1	47
Roundtable Discussions with Leaders in Health and Safety	6.38%	25.53%	38.30%	29.79%	
	3	12	18	14	47
Publicly Recognized as a Safe Workplace by the WSCC	21.74%	23.91%	30.43%	23.91%	
	10	11	14	11	46

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## Recognition as a Reward for Workplace Safety

The initial reward for Safe Workplace employers will begin in 2022 and will involve being recognized as a “Safe Workplace” or an “Advanced Safe Workplace” based on meeting program criteria. The recognition includes a certificate and the company’s name being published on WSCC Connect for other companies and the general public to view.

### *Value in Recognition*

Included in the positive responses supporting recognition as a valuable incentive were that this recognition would show employees that health and safety are important to the organization and that this recognition may also attract new clients and employees. This recognition would be a way to demonstrate the efforts made toward safety management within the organization. Where possible, respondents said they would like to include this recognition in procurement opportunities to gain more support for their applications. Finally, respondents in support of public recognition as a valuable incentive said that it would encourage employers to make safety an important part of the business.

### *Being Recognized is Not Important*

Respondents not in favour of public recognition as a viable incentive to advance OHS made up about 1/3 of the responses on this topic. These respondents did not believe that anyone would pay attention to the public recognition of their company for its health and safety efforts and that “a piece of paper is not an incentive.” Other reasons for not supporting this incentive were that other provinces receive money discounts on assessments and that financial rewards and penalties are the main factors in a company investing in workplace safety.

In addition, respondents cited a safety program is not important in getting work and that getting proper training and buying and maintaining equipment are very expensive in the North. The fact that the Safe Workplace designation is based on self-reporting of OHS programs holds little to no merit and clients will not consider such a designation as important when choosing which company to hire



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## What's Missing from the Proposed Program?

Survey respondents were asked what might be missing from the proposed Safe Workplace program as outlined in the online discussion paper. Some overarching themes were identified from the open-ended answers for this question, where the majority of respondents want coaching in what is expected for their OHS programs as well as getting required training.

### *OHS program coaching and mentoring*

Many respondents said it would be great to have a WSCC “coach” that employers could talk with “safely” to discuss any safety concerns before having an effective OHS program developed. The word coach was specifically used as fear of enforcement may deter employers from asking for help. In addition to WSCC coaches, respondents cited access to health experts (ie. ergonomists), worker safety training, and safety standards (CSA, ISO etc.), as being valuable to advance health and safety in their organizations.

The topic of support for health and safety guidance in office environments was mentioned a few times where respondents were unsure of how health and safety applied there. Template procedures and processes to build from

Coaching support was also mentioned to take the form of ensure that companies understand correctly their legislative responsibilities clearly and how to implement these responsibilities properly. This support could also take the form of what one respondent suggested as a “meet and greet with people who have been involved with workplace accidents to give a 'hands-on' perspective about the importance of safety.” Another mentioned, “pre-Site inspections with a knowledgeable member who is there not to fine or put fear but to help point out areas that should be improved to give employers a chance to “get it right.”

### *Health and Safety Training*

There was a significant need demonstrated in the survey and the same needs around health and safety training were repeated across many respondents. Many survey respondents want more training and better access to training, especially for remote communities where the Internet does not support online training opportunities and where face-to-face instruction is most effective. This training should also be accessible for those who may have difficulty learning as well as keeping up on local regulations and requirements for those employers who have worksites in numerous jurisdictions. WorkSafeBC was cited as having effective “regulation compliance” videos as part of their training modules.

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### *Financial Incentives and Penalties*

Suggestions of wanting financial incentives and penalties as part of the Safe Workplace program were less numerous than those for coaching and training on health and safety. Reasons given to support these types of incentives included that other jurisdictions use these methods, it's a way to identify unsafe employers or industries, and helps safety professionals get buy-in from their leadership and commitment from their companies to improve workplace health and safety. Lastly, financial incentives were listed as a way to fund improvements in health and safety.

### *WSCC Enforcement*

A few respondents cited WSCC enforcement as a missing part of the Safe Workplace program, possibly missing the criterion of meeting inspection orders.

### **Need for Tools and Resources**

Training was again mentioned by many respondents on the topic of what their company needs to improve their OHS program, in terms of having more training available and better access to the available training. In addition to training, many respondents suggested a variety of resources that would help them to advance their health and safety, such as newsletters, safety guides, employee materials, and templates, all of which WSCC already has and offers through the website and email.

Other suggestions that WSCC does not currently offer, include a safety resource database where companies can go to for safety training, suppliers, materials or equipment that is recognized and approved in the NWT, and benchmarking to other employers. This suggestion directly matches the potential of future Safe Workplace dashboard elements.

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## Conclusions on Engagement

This stakeholder engagement is deemed a success in meeting its pre-set outcomes: reached a diverse audience in terms of industry, organization size, and region in NT and NU; obtained information on the specific needs of stakeholders in overcoming challenges to advancing health and safety; and, provided awareness of the Safe Workplace program among those contacted. The information collected from stakeholders is valuable to the effective development of the Safe Workplace program and respondents demonstrated their vested interests in workplace health and safety as and their desire to advance OHS programming and eliminating injury, but through more support from WSCC. In conclusion, the majority of feedback received supports the current direction of Safe Workplace program development.

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## Recommendations for Safe Workplace

Moving forward with the development of the Safe Workplace program should consider the following recommendations that result from information obtained from this stakeholder engagement:

### Availability and Accessibility of Training and Resources

In order to be successful in their OHS programming and advancement of their safety culture, stakeholders have told us they need accessible and relevant training and resources. A few respondents expressed frustration with getting in contact with the NSA and that they have no presence in Nunavut.

As NSA has been tasked with safety training responsibilities, and as training is a significant interest to employers as an incentive, relations with NSA will need to be strengthened so that greater collaboration and overlap can take place on OHS education needs and WSCC employers and the needs of the Safe Workplace program.

### Mentoring for OHS Success

There was a significant need expressed for mentorship in getting OHS program “right” before being inspected or penalized for not having things in place for workplace health and safety.

### Safe Workplace Dashboard Development

The Safe Workplace dashboard has great potential to support many of the suggested needs for connection to relevant resources, seeing how industry classes overall are doing for comparison, and announcements of events and training opportunities.

### Future Engagements for Relevance and Timeliness

The majority of stakeholders who participated in this engagement were located in Yellowknife. In future engagements for development of the Safe Workplace program, efforts need to be made to target non-Yellowknife stakeholders, in addition to contacting stakeholders who were not part of this endeavour.

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## Appendices

- Appendix A: Stakeholder Engagement Online Survey
- Appendix B: List of Stakeholders Contacted
- Appendix C: Safe Workplace Discussion Paper
- Appendix D: Safe Workplace Discussion Paper Summary
- Appendix E: Presentation Prepared for Virtual Sessions
- Appendix F: Highlights of Virtual Sessions



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