

APPLYING *for the Program*

Criteria

In order to qualify for the Train for Trades program youth must be between the ages of 18 and 25. They must not have received Employment Insurance (EI) in the past three years and must not currently be EI eligible.

Unlike many programs, T4T wants to ensure that it is giving opportunities to at-risk youth, including those with mental health and addictions issues, criminal records, no high school education etc. While these barriers are not a must, a youth who is functioning well with few barriers will probably not be admitted to the program.

“You can be overqualified, if you’re currently working, if you’ve got your high school. If things are going well for you there’s no need for you to be in this support program. Generally the people who join are people who don’t have their high school, who are looking to get their GED. There are people who have it and still join Train for Trades because it’s something they need in their life. A friend of mine actually, he tried to join and he had a child (which is why he wanted to join) but he had a full-time job already and he had his high school. I mean he had everything working out for him so he was overqualified.”
—Matthew, age 21, Tier 1 participant

The following provides a snapshot of the backgrounds of youth participants in Train for Trades.

FIG.3 BACKGROUNDS OF T4T YOUTH PARTICIPANTS

67%	» Unstable housing in family origin
66%	» reliving this unstable housing situation
62%	» repeat shelter use
66%	» dropped out of school
72%	» unemployed
75%	» criminal justice system involvement
59%	» substance abuse issue



HOMELESS HUB THOUGHTS:

The chart demonstrates that the commitment Train for Trades has to working with at-risk youth is more than just on the surface. The youth that take part in the program bring significant challenges with them, which require ongoing support and intervention.

A program that is going to target and welcome youth from these backgrounds needs to ensure that it has the proper support in place in terms of staffing levels/skills, staff and youth training and safety. Programs also need to figure out what outcomes they want to achieve with youth from such diverse backgrounds and how they will go about achieving them.

Application/Screening Process

Youth serving agencies in St. John's and the surrounding area can refer youth to the program. In completing the referral form youth are asked to provide basic information and explain their personal/social barriers to employment. The referring agency is also able to explain why the individual would make a good candidate for Train for Trades.

The Program Coordinator and the Youth Supports Coordinator complete an in-depth intake assessment, which is 12 pages in length. In addition to making sure that the youth meet the specified criteria, they also want to ensure that the youth is ready to make a change. Areas on the intake and assessment form include:

- » reasons why the youth wants to apply for Train for Trades
- » history with employment and employment training programs
- » strengths and challenges in an employment setting
- » conflict resolution
- » educational history
- » family and friends/support systems
- » health overview (physical and mental health, dental and eye care)
- » drug and alcohol history
- » criminal justice history
- » housing situation
- » transportation access
- » financial and identification status



HOMELESS HUB THOUGHTS:

The level of detail in the intake and assessment is critical to ensuring, not only that the youth is a good fit with the program, but also that the program can provide the necessary supports to the young person.

It is important that a full explanation is given as to the reasons these questions are being asked. Because T4T encourages and supports participation from youth with significant risk factors, youth need to be informed that their honesty is critical in answering these questions. Youth have probably previously needed to hide the extent of the challenges in their history and current situation. This is a rare opportunity for them to share the full range of issues in their lives with someone who is not going to judge them.

“Sometimes there’s some criminal activities and you know, the youth really respects that we don’t judge that part of them. That’s one thing I always hear: ‘you know what, the past was the past and now we’re gonna move forward’. So, for the most part they face a lot of issues but they’re resilient, they definitely fight through. There’s lots of empathy around what they went through.”
—Corey Foley, Youth Supports Coordinator, Train for Trades

Duration

The initial length of the Train for Trades program was 44 weeks. This was designed to ensure that youth had enough hours to qualify for Employment Insurance and for funding to return to school.

Now that the Tier system is implemented there is no time restriction to move through the program. Some youth have been supported to stay in the program while on the waiting list for school, which provides them with extra income and gives T4T a skilled youth to assist in mentoring the newer participants.



HOMELESS HUB THOUGHTS:

As discussed in the EI section, eligibility varies across the country, so program planners should learn about EI eligibility in their own community if enabling youth to qualify for it is an objective.

In most cases, the length of time a youth can stay is going to be dependent on the financial resources of the organization. A balance will have to be struck between the ideal length of time needed to get a youth back on their feet with the help of supports and training and the need to have as many people participate in the program as possible.

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—Corey Foley, Train for Trades

Completion

The goal of T4T is to prepare youth for future employment or to get them ready to enter a training program ([post-secondary](#), apprenticeship etc.). The typical Train for Trades experience is 44 weeks, established, as discussed in Duration, to give youth enough hours to qualify for Employment Insurance (EI) and funding for school.

“An awesome program. I’d describe it as giving you a second chance in making your life better. I had zero to none experience when I started, and before my time was up I had all the experience I would need to start off here and make it easier for me to really start college. They pretty much save you in the long run if you listen them, do as they want you to do to succeed. It’s a great life turner. It’s a life-changing opportunity.”

—Samantha, age 22, past participant Train for Trades and Carpentry student at Carpenters Millwrights College

In Newfoundland, some students are able to access funding for post-secondary school through EI or through the provincial [Department of Advanced Education & Skills](#) (AES).

AES offers [Skills Development Training](#) funds to individuals who qualify for [EI](#). This funding can cover some or all of the costs associated with school for a period of up to three years including:

- » Tuition
- » Books
- » Mandatory Fees
- » Living Expenses
- » Dependent Care Expenses
- » Disability Needs
- » Transportation
- » Accommodation

Dylan, a Tier 3 participant, is on the waiting list for a heavy equipment operator course. He estimates that the funding he will receive because of his participation in T4T will save him \$16,000 in course fees.

AES also offers [wage subsidies](#) to employers who hire skilled trades workers or apprentices. Additionally, AES can provide individuals receiving social assistance with income while they are registered in school.

A variety of federal income assistance programs are available for individuals interested in [returning to school](#). Additionally, Service Canada offers [Apprenticeship Grants](#) during and upon completion of an apprenticeship to qualified individuals. It is important to ensure that Employment Skills Development Canada staff (or their designate) give you permission to attend school while on EI or your eligibility may be cancelled.

**"An *awesome* program.
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you *a second chance* in
making your *life better*."**

—Samantha, age 22, Past Participant of Train for Trades



Sheldon Pollett is the Executive Director of Choices for Youth.

“We are in the business of having our employees stolen. In fact, one of our young people recently took two weeks to tell us about an employment opportunity he had in the private sector, because he was so loyal and didn’t want to disappoint us. But once he finally broke the news and told us we were ecstatic for him. Why would we ever hold a young person back from the kind of opportunity that this is all designed around?”

—Sheldon Pollett, Executive Director, Choices for Youth



HOMELESS HUB THOUGHTS:

The funding opportunities available in Newfoundland/Labrador are not necessarily the same in all other provinces/territories. There are limited resources available to support individuals to attend post-secondary school. What is available depends on the province/territory’s legislation and funding supports, the current economic climate, an individual’s status (i.e. special programs exist for women, people with disabilities, Aboriginal Peoples) and other factors.

Programs should not be designed with an expectation that all individuals will be able to attend post-secondary training, unless the funding options are continually and thoroughly investigated and regularly updated.

However, this is not to say that post-secondary education should not be a goal of such a program. Agencies may wish to pursue corporate sponsorship or other funding sources to be able to offer scholarships to individuals who wish to attend. Combined with EI (assuming the individual receives permission to attend school) and scholarships, there may be sufficient funding to support someone’s tuition and other costs.