



Workforce Development Agreement **Rural Urban 2019 Report**

Canada 





Introduction

The Workforce Development Agreement (WDA) is a bilateral agreement providing \$685 million over six years, including \$116 million in incremental funding, for labour market programming in B.C.

To deliver WDA programs, the Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training (AEST) works with a network of service delivery agencies, employers, industry organizations, and communities throughout the province to align and deliver skills training programs and services for all British Columbians including:

- the **BC Employer Training Grant** (BCETG), which is designed to assist employers to provide skills training to new or current employees to develop skills and certification;
- the **Community Workforce Response Grant** (CWRG), which provides flexible and timely responses to emerging and urgent labour and skills needs in B.C.'s communities and sectors;
- the **Skills Training for Employment Programs for Vulnerable and Underrepresented Groups** (STPVU) program, which is focused on meeting the needs of vulnerable and under-represented groups.

This report provides an overview of British Columbians who participated in WDA-funded STPVU programs during the 2018-19 fiscal year, and a summary of participants' outcomes from a rural-urban perspective¹.

This is the first report of a series of thematic reports that will highlight key outcomes from AEST WDA programs. Upcoming reports will examine the employer and community focused programs and provide more in-depth analysis on specific identity groups served by WDA programs, including young adults and women.



STPVU Programs

The overarching goal of STPVU programs is to help participants become employment ready and secure labour market attachment. Eligible participants for STPVU program include: Young Adults; Young Adults at Risk (including former youth in care); Older Workers 55+; Survivors of Violence, Abuse and/or Trauma; Individuals who face multiple barriers; and Indigenous persons.

For Fiscal Year 2018/19 specific programs that fall under the STPVU program include:

- the Employment Services and Supports programs² (ESS)
- the BladeRunners program
- Pre-apprenticeship programs delivered through the Industry Training Authority (ITA)
- the Aboriginal Community-Based Training program³ (ACBTP)

The expected outcomes for this program include:

1. Improvement in skills
2. Participants progress along the employment continuum
3. Improvement in participants' employment situation

STPVU Programs and Participants⁴

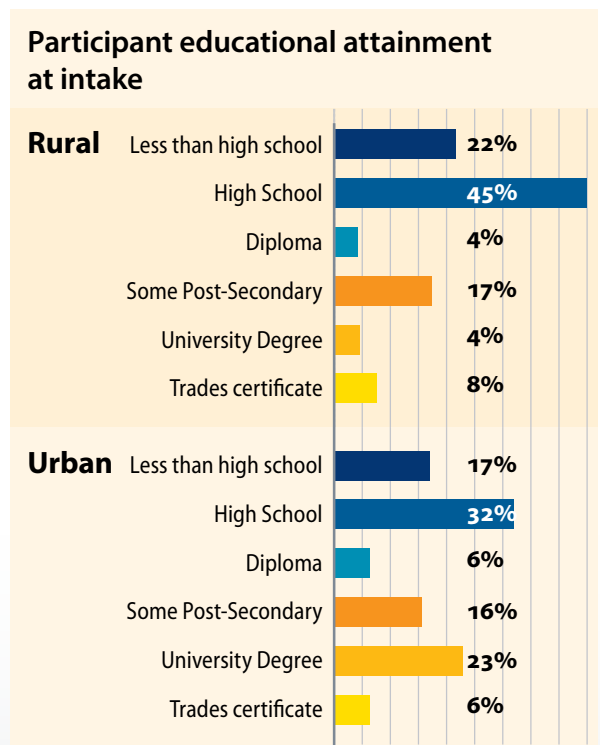
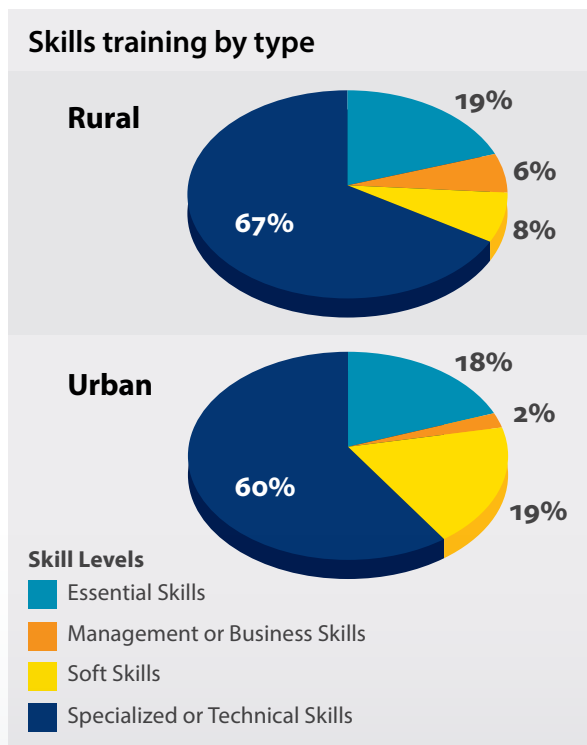
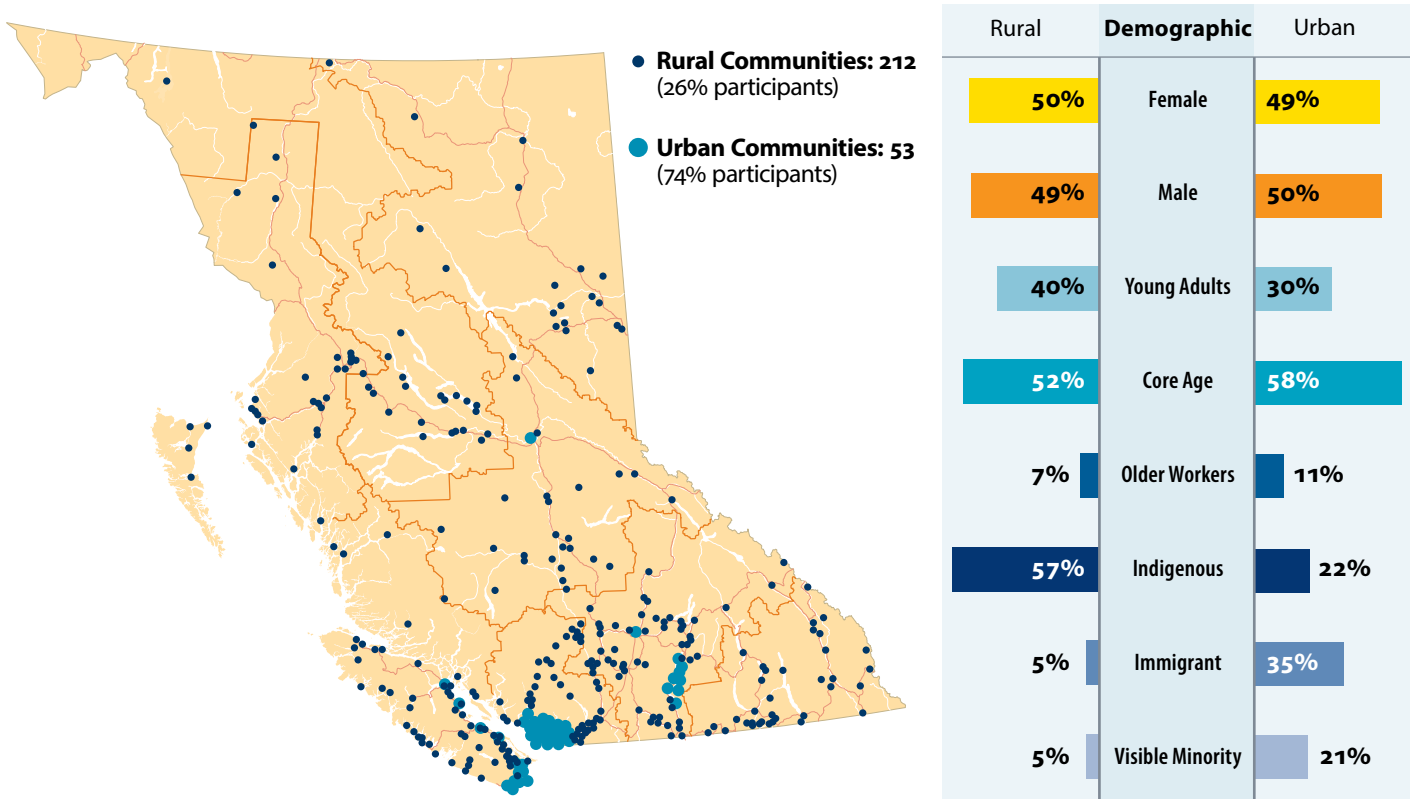
During the 2018-2019 fiscal year, STPVU programs across the province served 7,880 British Columbians (See Figure A). Approximately one-quarter of these participants attended programs in rural areas and 74% attended programs in urban areas. Participants included males and females; young adults, core age adults, and older workers (aged 55 and over); Indigenous Peoples; immigrants; and visible minorities. 57% of individuals who participated in rural programs identified as Indigenous, compared to 22% of individuals who participated in urban programs. In turn, only 5% of individuals who participated in rural programs identified as immigrants, compared to 35% of individuals who participated in urban programs.

Program participants were almost as likely to attend essential skills training programs that were delivered in urban areas, as they were to attend essential skills programs that were delivered in rural areas (18% compared to 19%, respectively). Participants were more likely to attend management or business skills training programs and specialized or technical training programs in rural areas, than participants in urban areas. In turn, participants were more likely to attend soft skills training programs in urban areas, than participants in rural areas.

Levels of education for rural and urban participants varied. More urban participants had university level education than rural participants, and more rural participants achieved high school as their highest level of education.

Figure A: STPVU Programs in 2018-2019

■ 7,880 STPVU participants were served across British Columbia



Program Outcomes for STPVU Participants⁵

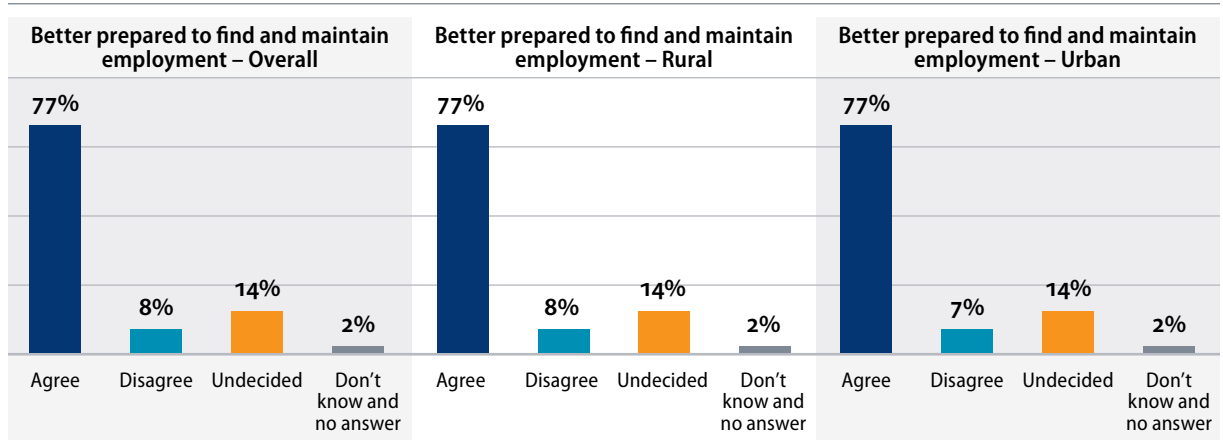
Outcome #1: Improvement in skills

STPVU programs intend to help British Columbians improve their skills. These include soft skills such as employment readiness and confidence. They also include essential skills, management or business skills, and specialized or technical skills.

Preparedness for employment:

- Three months after exiting their programs, slightly more than three-quarters (77%) of program participants agreed that they feel that the program they completed, better prepared them to find and maintain employment.
- Participants who completed their programs in rural areas were just as likely to agree that they felt better prepared to find and maintain employment as participants who completed their program in urban areas.

Figure B: I feel that I am better prepared to find and maintain employment

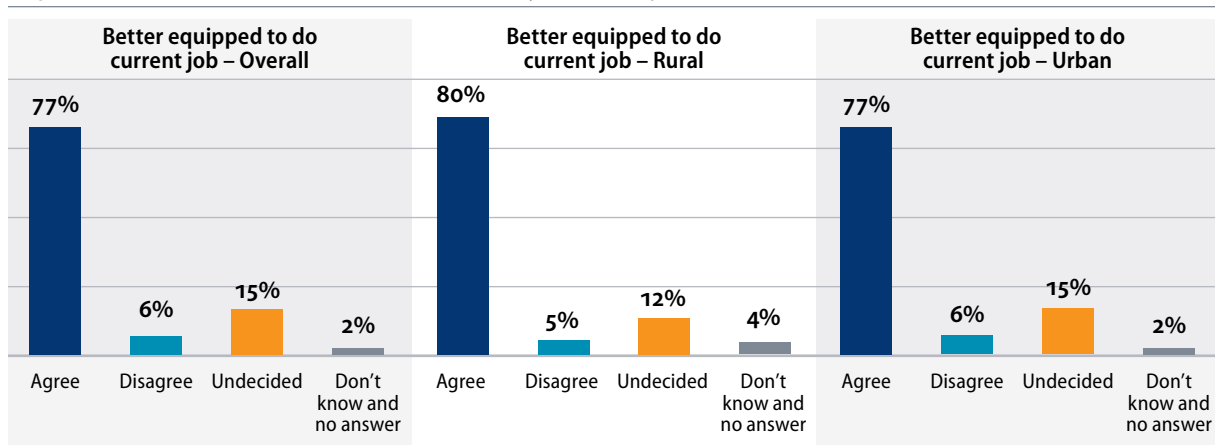


Gaining confidence:

- Three months after exiting their programs, slightly more than three-quarters (77%) of (employed) participants agreed that they are better equipped to do their job as a result of completing the program.
- Participants who completed their programs in rural areas were slightly more likely to agree that they are better equipped to do their job (80%) than participants who completed their training or program in urban areas (77%).

Through Aunt Leah's I was able to meet people who not only supported my dreams, not only helped direct my goals, not only helped fund, those folks at Aunt Leah's gave me the confidence I needed to be the well adjusted, educated, and hard worker that I know I am.

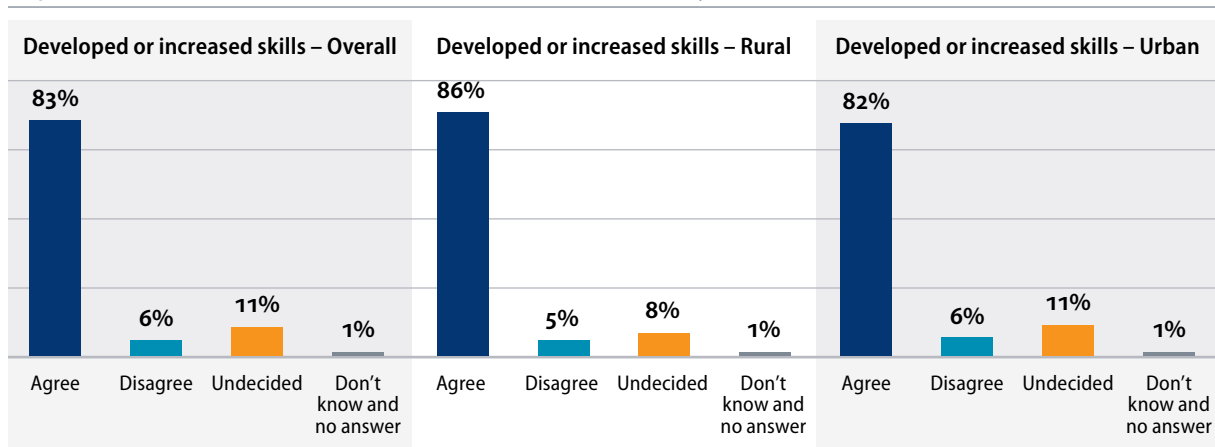
Figure C: I am better equipped to do my current job



Acquisition of Skills:

- Three months after exiting their programs, 83% of participants agreed that they feel the program they completed helped them develop or increase their skills.
- Participants who completed their programs in rural areas were slightly more likely to agree that they developed or increased their skills (86%) than participants who completed their training or programs in urban areas (82%).

Figure D: I feel that I have developed or increased my skills



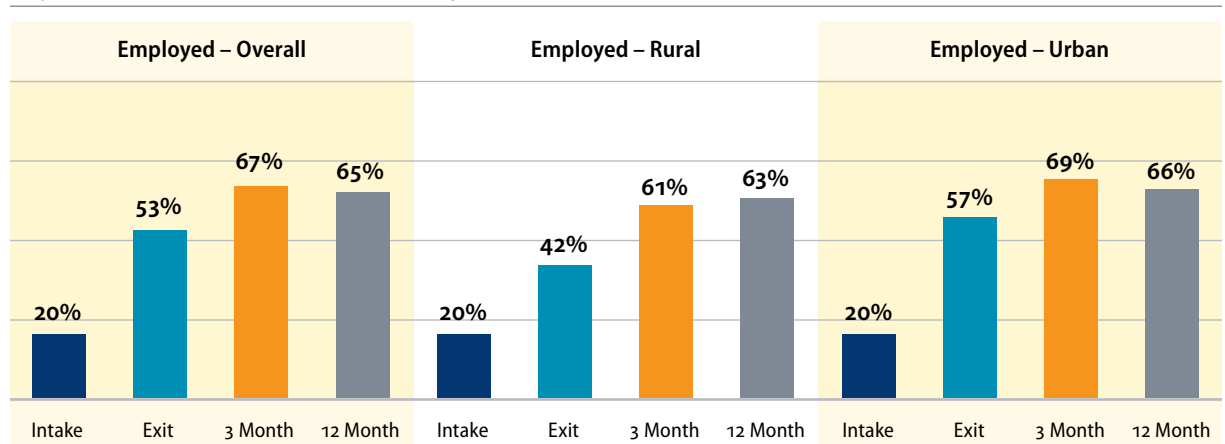
Outcome #2: Participants progress along the employment continuum

STPVU programs intend to help British Columbians progress along the employment continuum. This includes helping participants obtain employment. It also includes helping participants decide if they would like to take further education and/or training to help them achieve their employment or career goal.

Participants employed after completing a program

- At intake, approximately one-fifth of participants were employed. Upon exiting their programs, 53% of participants were employed – an increase of 33 percentage points. Three months following their programs, two-thirds of participants were employed.
- While at intake, British Columbians enrolled in a program in rural areas were just as likely to be employed as those in urban areas, this was not the case at program exit nor at three months following program completion.
- Upon exiting the program, 42% of participants who completed a program in rural areas were employed, compared to 57% in urban areas – a difference of 15 percentage points. Three months following the program, 61% of participants who completed programs in rural areas were employed, compared to 69% in urban areas – a difference of 9 percentage points. Twelve months after the program however, this gap narrowed to a difference of 3 percentage points.

Figure E: % of Participants Employed



Note: Employed includes employed and self-employed

Decision to pursue further education or training

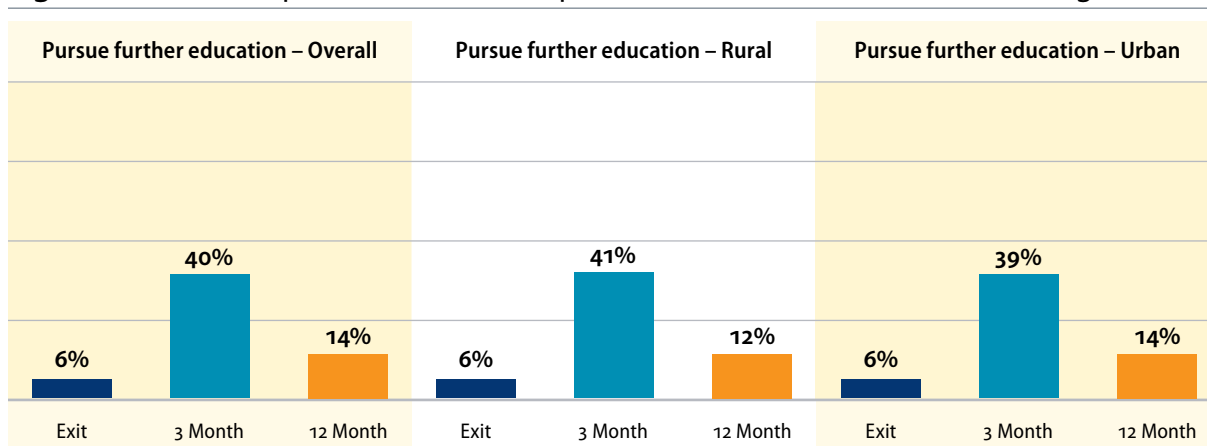
- Of the participants who were unemployed at program exit (47%), 6% decided to pursue further education and/or training. This number increased to 40% 3 months after completing the program.

I am a teacher who came to Canada from the Philippines more than 20 twenty years ago. I have been hoping to do permanent teaching since we migrated here but for some family reasons, I was not able to get certified. As a mother I had to forego my personal goals for my children’s sake. I had to give way for my daughters to finish their respective courses and when they were done, I thought I was too old to go back to school to finish education.

This outlook of mine changed last November 2019 when I attended the 15 most educational and informative days I spent in 2019. Those days were at S.U.C.C.E.S.S. in Surrey. Together with about eight classmates I took the program called “Digital Skills Upgrading for Job Seekers Aged 55+” also known as a “Job Search Program” tailored for Mature Workers. In this 3-week Group-Based Skills Training Program, my classmates and I learned the 21st century techniques of Career Planning, Job Search Skills, Digital Skills, Essential Skills, Soft Skills, Job Maintenance Skills and Workplace Health, Safety and Wellness. We had competent and effective instructors that made the learning more interesting. We learned to construct resumes up to the 21st century standards and how to conduct ourselves during interviews which I believe to be very useful in marketing our skills to the labour market.

This training also guided me to conduct two informational interviews that opened the avenue for me to realize my ultimate goal – to be a certified teacher. Right now, I am in the process of registering at Douglas College for the TESL program which will start this summer semester. I know that I am on the right path to achieving my ultimate goal of being certified and be back to be practicing the profession that’s in my DNA – teaching.

Figure F: % of Participants who decide to pursue further education and/or training



Outcome #3: Participants experience an improvement in their employment situation

STPVU programs intend to help British Columbians improve their employment situation overall. This includes helping participants gain the skills or work experience they need to obtain employment that offers more hours of work per week, or an increase in pay⁶. It also includes helping participants find employment that feels secure to them.

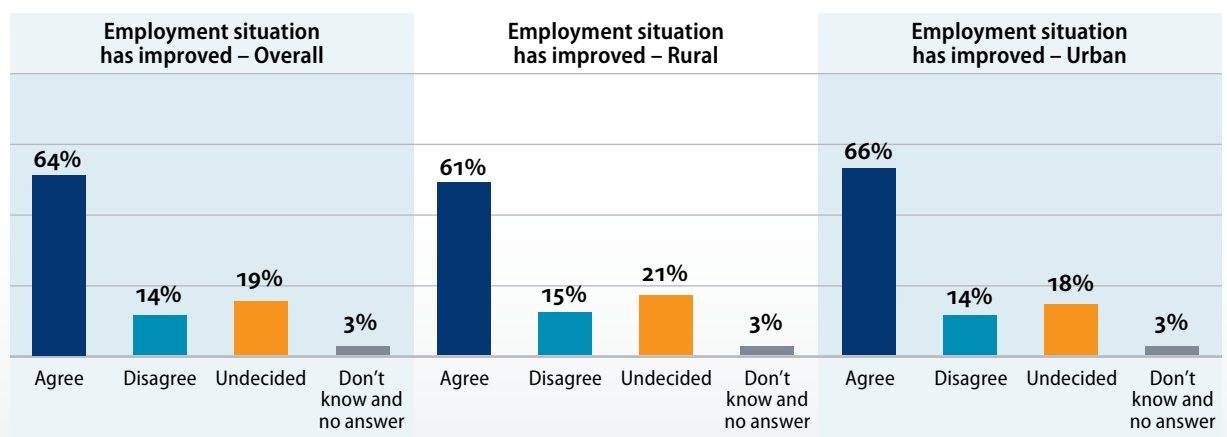
Improvement in employment situation

- Three months after exiting their programs, almost two-thirds of participants (64%) agreed that their employment situation improved as a result of completing the program.
- Those who completed their programs in rural areas were slightly less likely to agree that their employment situation improved (61%) than participants who completed their programs in urban areas (66%).

The Participant saw the FreshSTART signage and came to the office to investigate the program. The Participant had retail and serving experience but no current certifications. She was willing to work at various positions but has a goal of eventually getting into customer service; and to this end she would like to get a customer service position with an airline. In alignment with her goals, the participant agreed that she should do Stress Management, Self-esteem, and Goal Setting workshops, as well as complete short-term occupational certification in Occupational First Aid Level 1, Foodsafe, Serving it Right and Super Host. The Participant successfully completed all four Short Term Orientation & Certificates (STOC) and then participated in resume building, interviewing and job search related workshops.

The Participant completed skills training and applied to Air Canada and WestJet postings for local customer service positions, as well as numerous restaurants and wine/beer retail outlets. She was advised that the airlines positions had already been filled, but she was offered a position with a wine and beer outlet. She accepted the part-time position and later in the same month, the participant advised FreshSTART that her hours had been increased and that she had already received a raise. She also advised us that she obtained a second part-time position serving at a local restaurant.

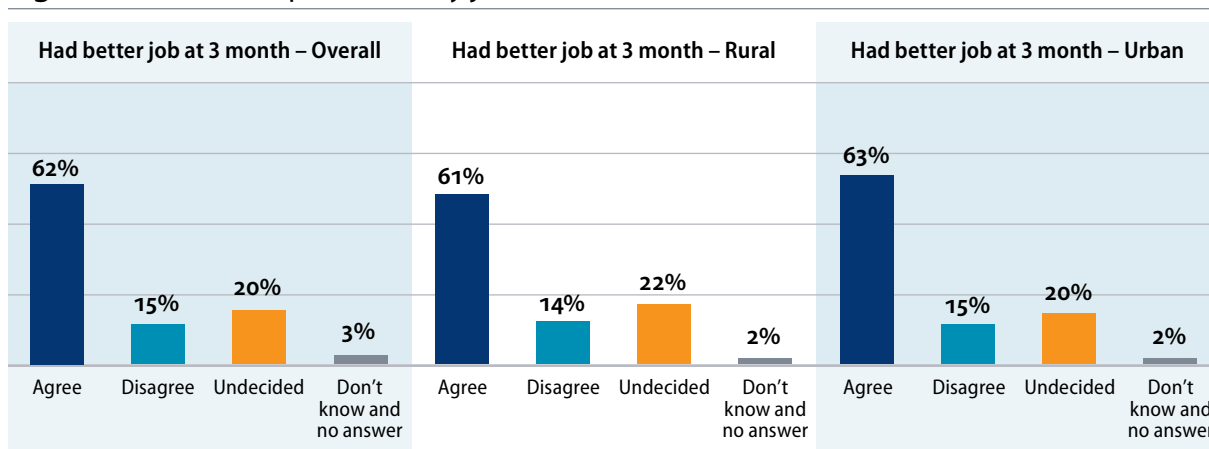
Figure G: My employment situation has improved



Better Job

- Three months after exiting their programs, 62% of participants agreed that they feel their job is better. This increased by 4 percentage points to 66% 12 months after exiting the program.
- Participants who completed their programs in rural areas were slightly less likely to agree that they feel their job is better (61%) three months after exiting the program, than participants who completed their training or programs in urban areas (63%)

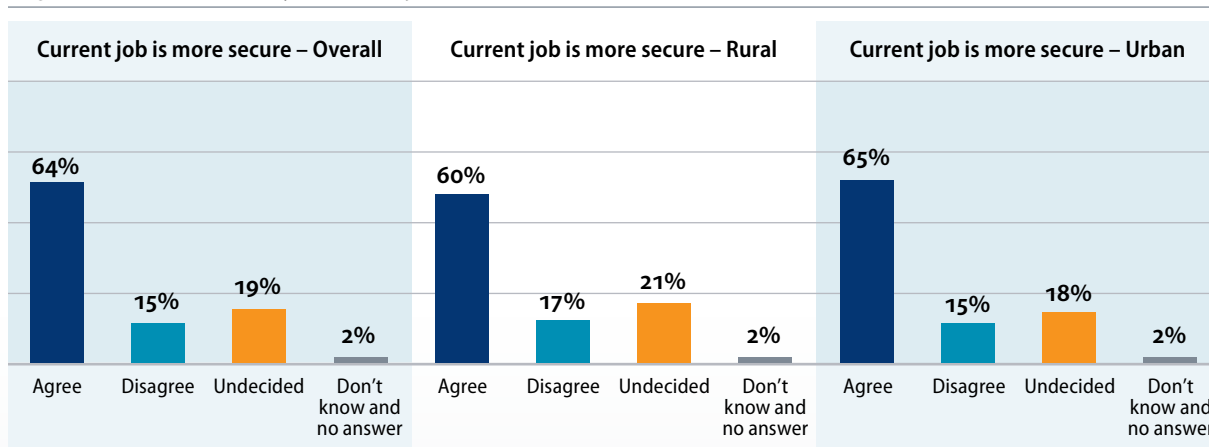
Figure H: % of Participants feel my job is better at 3 months



Increased Job Security

- Three months after exiting their programs, almost two-thirds (64%) of (employed) participants agreed that they feel their job is more secure as a result of completing their programs.
- Those who completed their programs in rural areas were slightly less likely to agree that they feel their job is more secure (60%) than participants who completed their training or programs in urban areas (65%).

Figure I: I feel that my current job is more secure



Conclusion

During the 2018/19 year, AEST worked with a network of service delivery agencies, employers, industry organizations, and communities throughout the province to deliver STPVU programs to 7,880 British Columbians.

This report shows that STPVU programs achieved their overarching goal to help participants in both rural and urban areas become employment ready and secure labour market attachment. Specifically, the programs helped participants:

- improve their skills;
- progress along the employment continuum; and
- improve their employment situation.

For the most part, the differences between outcomes for participants who completed a program in rural areas and participants who completed a program in urban areas were minimal. Results were similar for rural and urban participants with respect to improvements in their skills and their employability, as well as their overall employment situation.

The one exception related to employment status: participants who completed programs in urban areas were much more likely to be employed at exit, and 3 months after exiting the program, than participants who completed their program in rural areas. Within 12 months after exiting the program however, this gap narrowed.



Endnotes

- 1** Programs are delivered in rural and urban areas in British Columbia. This report defines rural areas as rural towns and small population centres under 25,000. This includes Census subdivision (CSD), with a population of less than 25,000 and excluding population centres that belong to a Census Metropolitan Area (CMA).
- 2** Starting in 2019/20, ESS agreements were gradually replaced by Skills Training for Employment (STE) programs. All ESS agreements ended on March 31, 2020.
- 3** In April 2019, the ACBPT transitioned to the Indigenous Programs Unit in AEST's Workforce Innovation and division responsible for Skills Training.
- 4** Data: Before, during and after exiting the program, participants are asked to complete up to 2 sources of data: intake and exit information is collected from participants by service providers while 3 and 12-month follow-up surveys are administered by BC Stats. During their participation in the program, participants are also asked to provide qualitative feedback in the form of short summaries about their experiences with the program. These short stories are collected by service providers. Analysis of this data informed this report. Throughout the report, percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.
- 5** Statistical significance for survey results: For the Rural respondents-90% confidence interval with 4% of margin of error and for urban respondents-90% confidence interval with 2% margin of error.
- 6** Due to data quality issues, wage data is omitted in this analysis. Rather, the analysis relies on a proxy from the outcome survey question where participants are asked if they have obtained a better job as a result of completing their program.



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