

TRAIN FOR TRADES

Overview

“I call it the raw material of an opportunity, because our real objective is training and employing at-risk youth to have every opportunity to live sustainable futures.”
—Sheldon Pollett, Executive Director, Choices for Youth

Train for Trades (T4T) was created in 2008 to provide employment for at-risk and homeless youth. It uses the expression “Real Pay, Real Work” to emphasize that while this is a support program it is also employment.

The program has three main categories of focus:

- » **Training** – designed to meet the needs of youth and industry, where youth receive the necessary safety knowledge and general construction training combined with energy efficiency retrofit training to prepare them for a career in the trades.
- » **Employment** – industry driven and meaningful, where youth are given the opportunity to gain valuable construction/energy efficiency retrofit experience, build on acquired knowledge and learn how to manage a job.
- » **Support** – Intensive Support Model (ISM) implemented to help youth navigate a personal plan for success and to attain the stability necessary to move forward in their lives.

The program targets many of the hardest-to-serve youth, including those without a high school education (or literacy issues), individuals with a history of addiction or mental health issues and youth who have been involved in the criminal justice system.

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History

Based on Eva's Phoenix in Toronto, the program emerged during the renovation of the Lilly Building, a former warehouse space that was developed into a Transitional Housing program for youth. Participants in T4T were engaged in the process of renovating the building. The success of the pilot proved that the program model was successful and that training/employment could help at-risk youth achieve positive changes in their lives.

To help determine the next stage of the project, Choices for Youth (CFY) looked to Winnipeg's [BUILD](#) organization; specifically the Warm-Up Winnipeg program.

BUILD, an acronym for Building Urban Industries for Local Development, "is a social enterprise non-profit contractor and a training program for people who face barriers to employment. We retrofit homes with insulation and high-efficiency toilets as well as water-and-energy-saving devices (showerheads, CFLs etc.). Our work lowers utility bills, employs neighbourhood people, cuts crime, and decreases greenhouse gas emissions" (BUILD website).

BUILD's program is six months in length and includes an 8-10 week in-class component that looks at both vocational training and life skills training. This is followed by a four month practicum where participants can get work experience in one of BUILD's five social enterprise divisions: Insulation, Plumbing, Maintenance, Patch and Paint, Cabinet. What's especially unique about BUILD is that local jobs are

A shift was therefore made in the Train for Trades program to focus on green retrofitting – improving energy efficiency in low-income social housing. This allowed CFY to develop a program that was a crossover of three key social issues – youth homelessness, unemployment and energy conservation. It also allowed the organization to address the skilled trades labour force shortage by improving basic skill levels and readying young people for further training or employment.

As the program evolved, new stages were added (the Tier system) and new kinds of work emerged, including Modernization and Improvement through Newfoundland Labrador Housing Corporation and private contracting. The program continues to evolve – particularly as it moves to become a self-sustaining social enterprise – and these changes will be discussed further in the section '[Changes to T4T for 2015-2016](#)'.

