

**LEADING PRACTICE GUIDE**

**Finding  
the Right  
Entry-Level  
Workers**

# Introduction

Talent attraction and retention have never been more critical. We live in both an innovation age and a highly competitive market for talent. Businesses of all sizes are under more pressure than ever to set themselves apart as a great place for talented people to work.

Managing and developing talent remains critical to a company's growth prospects. Our region's businesses must rise to the occasion, leveraging best practices and established expertise to build their talent pipeline over time. That's why the Board is pleased to introduce our six Leading Practice Guides, born from our workforce development strategy, "[Unlocking Talent](#)".

Unlocking Talent highlighted how we can turn system gaps and barriers into opportunities in three areas: (i) collaborating to narrow the skills gap; (ii) promoting collective workforce development in the skilled trades; and (iii) growing the region's youth talent pipeline and immigrant talent pipeline.

To build on these areas, the Board convened senior business leaders for a series of roundtables, to share lessons learned and best practices on pressing workforce development challenges and opportunities. As a result, we have focused on 6 urgent priorities for the Leading Practice Guides:



Supporting Employee Soft Skill Development



Reducing Integration Barrier for Immigrant Workers



Finding the Right Entry-Level Workers



Increasing Work-Integrated Learning ("WIL") Opportunities



Tapping into the Immigrant Talent Pool



Expanding Mental Health Supports for Younger Workers

We hope they will be used as blueprints for success, helping businesses of every size contribute to a workforce that thrives in tomorrow's economy.

## Giles Gherson

President & CEO,  
Toronto Region Board of Trade

## Blaine Woodcock

National Strategy, Analytics & M&A Portfolio Leader, Deloitte  
Vice Chair of the Talent Committee, Toronto Region Board of Trade



# Overview

According to a [LinkedIn study from 2022](#), more than 40% of recruiters say entry-level positions are the hardest to fill. Several issues are likely at play. First, there is a misalignment between how employers assess requisite skills, and how employers and workers talk about skills. Also, employers are likely relying on outdated assumptions of what a particular job entails and may be overstating the required technical skillset, while job-seekers are not always accurately assessing their competencies or struggle to articulate the skills they possess. This is particularly challenging for entry-level positions, where many applicants have no previous work experience, but job descriptions often ask for years of work experience. There also continues to be biases in the hiring process, limiting the pool of potential applicants or new hires.

**To support employers in filling entry-level jobs, this Leading Practice Guide will:**

- Provide tools and practical guidance on crafting effective job descriptions and pre-screening requirements
- Identify how to mitigate bias in hiring
- Explore existing resources and tools to support employer

# Leading Practices

## How to Effectively Create Job Descriptions

### 1.1 Job analysis

The starting point of hiring entry-level employees is a job analysis to take a realistic view of the essential functions of a position, including the minimum competencies, knowledge, and skills to fill these functions. Employers can use the following questions as their initial assessment to determine the description of the role:

**Which technical skills are most important for this role?**

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**Which soft skills are important to have for this role?**

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**What are the personality traits or characteristics that are required from the candidate in order to be successful?**

### 1.2 Descriptions shouldn't reflect competencies built over time

When crafting entry-level job descriptions, many employers may be relying on feedback from employees that have been in the position for several years and have developed competencies over time. Instead, employers should consider the skills and competencies these employees had when they started in their positions – not what they've accomplished over time. There is also at times an expectation that new hires will have the skills and competencies to immediately advance into more senior positions; instead, employers should consider skills development opportunities to help these staff advance. Therefore, job descriptions should describe the position to be filled—not the individual who has filled the position in the past. See **Exhibit A** for a sample job description template for reference.





## 1.3 Reflect corporate values and culture

Younger job-seekers may also be particularly interested in corporate values and culture, and so it is critical that culture is described within the job description. Health and insurance coverage, perks, and other workplace benefits should also be included.

### Additional Resources:

- The [Government of Canada Job Bank](#) provides guidance to employers on conducting a job analysis and writing job descriptions, including consideration of how quality of work will be assessed, essential competencies, as well as the experience and education required for a given position. Employers should remove any functions not necessary for the job, and avoid restrictive requirements for “years of experience,” especially for entry-level positions.
- Taxonomies and skills frameworks may be helpful in clarifying the components and competencies related to a skill. Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) has developed a [Skills and Competencies Taxonomy](#) that may be a helpful starting point for employers to think about their needs.
- The Conference Board of Canada’s [OpportuNext](#) web-based tool allows users to explore skills-based career pathways. They have also developed a Model of Occupations, Skills and Technologies (MOST) that generates detailed occupational and industry-level projections and connects findings with specific skills. These tools can help refine the ways in which employers understand the skills and competencies they need in their organizations, and communicate these skills in job postings.



### Action Summary

1. Conduct a ‘job analysis’
2. Ensure descriptions reflect competencies required for an entry-level worker, not those developed over time
3. Reflect corporate values and culture in job descriptions
4. Utilize existing frameworks, such as the Government of Canada’s [job description standards](#) and ESDC’s [skills and competencies taxonomy](#), to craft descriptions

**EXHIBIT A****Sample: Job Description Template****JOB TITLE**

- Clear and reflective of duties and responsibilities

**DIVISION/UNIT OF ORGANIZATION**

- Usually includes business unit or section (if applicable)
- Organizational structure, ie: reporting to the manager, title, and location

**JOB OBJECTIVE**

- A short summary on the purpose of the position
- Description can be as short as one paragraph

**KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES**

- This section should include essential functions, including major responsibilities and day to day tasks expected to be completed
- Should be as specific as possible to reduce confusion
- Each statement should begin with an action verb to describe the ongoing tasks

**QUALIFICATIONS**

Based on different HR requirements for the position. Choose the following components as needed:

- Education level/years of experience
- Technical requirements
- Soft skill requirements

**WORK HOURS AND LOCATION(S)**

- Expected hours of work in a week
- City and address of the work location
- Clearly state if there are travel requirements, with % of time required (approximately)
- Any other work conditions that the potential candidate should know

**SALARY AND BENEFITS**

- May include a salary range
- Compensation: remuneration and benefits (such as health insurance), additional paid time off, etc.

**COMPANY DESCRIPTION AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

- Company description and a space to market your organization to candidates
- Contact information



## Reduce Barriers to Entry-level Employment

### Work Experience Requirements

A key barrier to hiring entry-level workers is a requirement for previous work experience. While this may simplify the recruitment process by screening out applicants, it unnecessarily restricts the pool and may weed out high-performing candidates by setting the bar too high. Moreover, experience is not the only predictor of success. For entry-level positions, soft skills such as critical thinking, communication skills, coachability, and cultural fit may be more important, where interviewers should be focused on transferable skills in nonprofessional, volunteer or team-oriented activities. Employers should consider skills transferability from other sectors, volunteer experience, or other life experiences.

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### TYPES OF PRE-EMPLOYMENT ASSESSMENTS



#### **Cognitive Aptitude**

Measures learning ability, critical thinking, problem solving, and application of learnings to new challenges.



#### **Personality**

Tests the personality of candidates and is used as a tool to assess how the individual will fit into the team culture.



#### **Emotional Intelligence**

Assesses how the candidate will collaborate with others, their motivation to work, and decision-making process.



#### **Risk**

Tests candidates' risk preference. Certain positions have low risk tolerance where employers would prefer candidates to be risk-averse.



#### **Skill**

An assessment of position-related skills, including writing, coding, public speaking, leadership styles, etc.



## Focus on Education Credentials

Another key barrier is the focus on education credentials over skills and competencies. A credentials-focused approach may create barriers to otherwise qualified candidates. Increasingly, hiring practices are shifting away from educational credentials, taking a skills-based approach, with pre-employment assessments supporting this process. Employers should also be aware of [micro-credential programs](#) that may be more accessible to job-seekers, but do not have the same “brand awareness” as post-secondary degree programs.

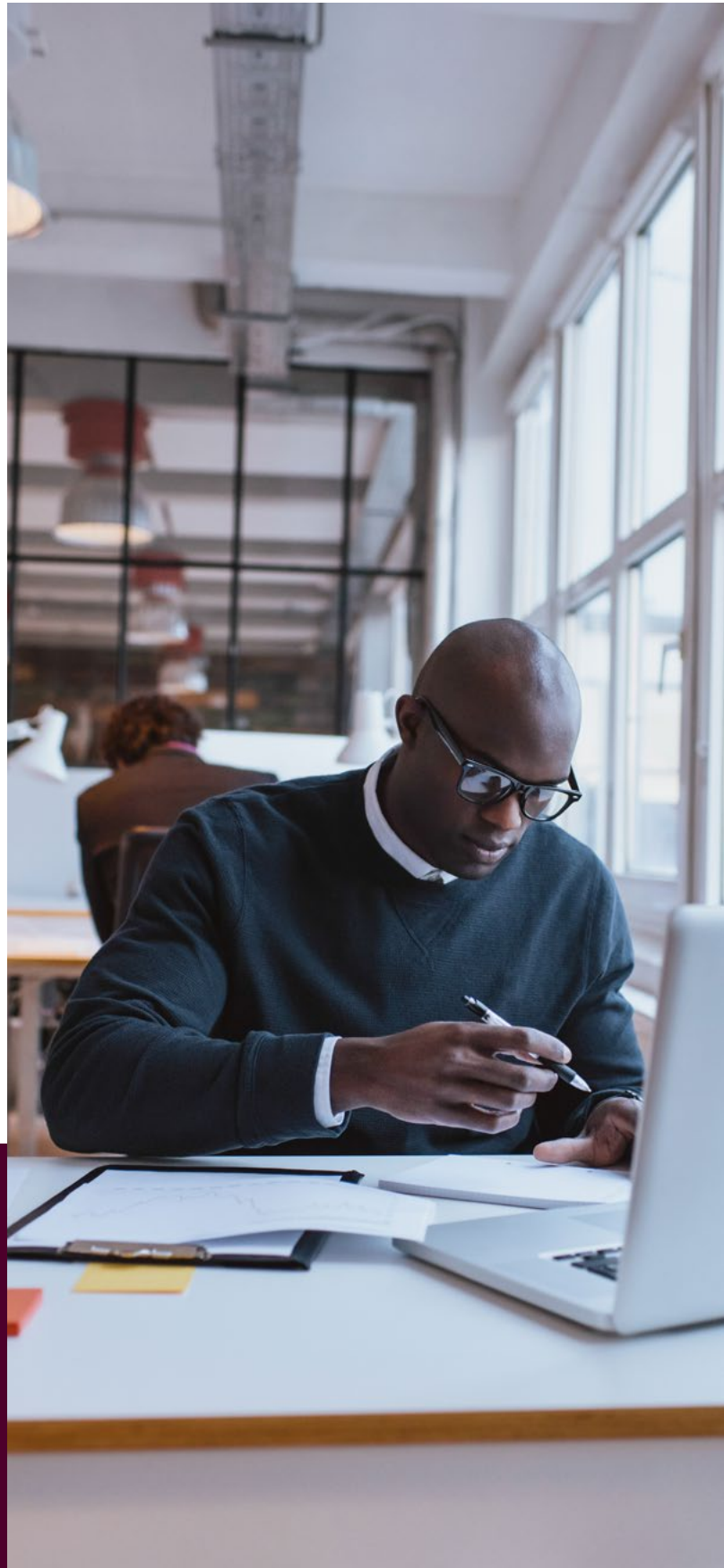
## Pre-Employment Assessment Resources

Tools such as [Harver](#), [LinkedIn Skills Path](#), [Vervoe](#) and [iMocha](#) offer skills assessments to support hiring. These tools can include aptitude testing, personality testing, customizable tests, skills assessments, automatic grading, and candidate management.



## Action Summary

1. Avoid setting unnecessarily high work experience requirements.
2. Prioritize skills and competencies-based assessments for hiring as opposed to only considering traditional education credentials.







# Additional Considerations

## Mitigate Bias in Hiring

More than ever, companies are looking at ways to increase the number of underrepresented employees in their workforce. A diverse workforce leads to increased creativity, more innovation, and better decision-making. While a DEI focus needs to run through all employer activities, removing bias during the hiring process is critical, and hiring managers should be trained to spot their own bias, encourage a diverse interviewer panel, and should consider establishing diversity benchmarks. [The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion](#) has a set of tools that may be helpful to employers.

There are also several [tech tools](#) to support the process. [Gender Decoder](#) is a free tool that helps companies review job descriptions to ensure that gender-coded language is reduced or removed. [Unbiasify](#) is a free Google Chrome extension that toggles off names and photos from LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter to mitigate the unconscious bias we might have when looking at names and faces.

## Consider Pathways to Develop Strategic HR Capacity

As noted in [Unlocking Talent](#), many employers – particularly smaller firms – lack a dedicated strategic HR function to support forward-looking recruitment, skills development, and implementation of HR best practices. When HR capacity is improved, SMEs can better assess the skills they need, hire the employees they need, and seek out programs to recruit, train, and retain workers.

One option to build strategic HR capacity is to adopt a fractional HR model, where an HR advisor can support hiring, onboarding, compliance, performance management, and other strategic HR needs on a limited basis, for example, one day per month. This can be an affordable way to build strategic HR capacity to advise on how to fill positions, advance employee skills, and create pathways into your organization without the resource requirements of a full-time team member.



# Case Study

## A Pathway to Remove Barriers for Entry Level Workers – The Career Foundation and EllisDon<sup>1</sup>

### BACKGROUND

With significant anticipated growth in the construction sector between now and 2030, there is a real need for talent. Much of the industry is facing challenges finding experienced candidates for project management and superintendent roles in Civil and ICI construction, including EllisDon. To increase access for candidates who wish to start a career in the industry, while working towards supervisory level careers, the development of a jr. field coordinator role was created. With training and experience, candidates in this role have the potential to develop into future construction project managers, superintendents and beyond.

### CHALLENGE

How can EllisDon address the labour shortage and help develop a diverse pool of construction professionals.

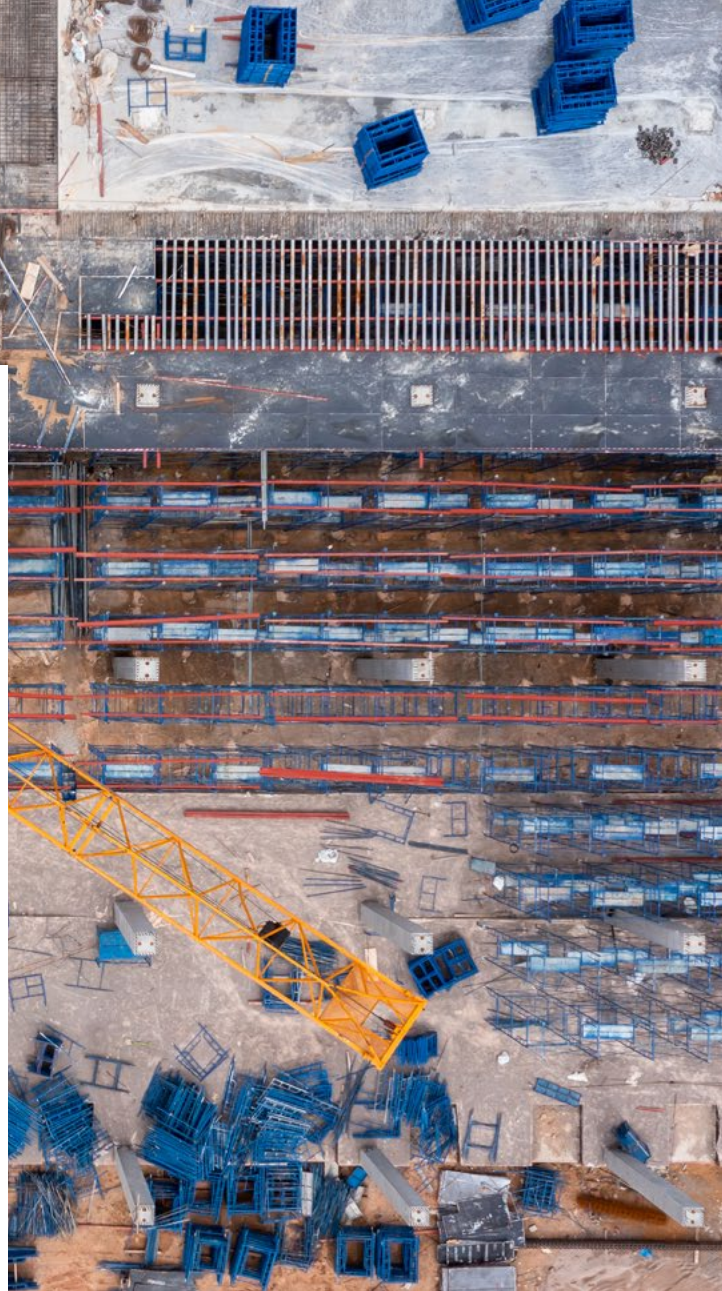
### Approach

Representatives of EllisDon and The Career Foundation were both panelists at a Labour Shortage session at The Building Show at Metro Toronto Convention Centre in 2021. During the session, The Career Foundation highlighted the benefits of community-based workforce development program to address recruitment challenges faced by many industries today. This talent solution resonated with EllisDon and sometime after they approached The Career Foundation to help address the talent gap. Members of the Career Foundation team took on the request and worked collaboratively with EllisDon and different collaborators – including existing workers in the project management and superintendent roles, and the Ontario General Contractors Association – to better understand the



needs for these positions. Their analysis included: what are the 'must have' requirements for this position, including the years of experience required, and if there was a more junior role that led to the construction management positions. Together, the team identified a "Junior Construction Field Coordinator" role as a natural precursor and created a brand-new job description, developed a training path including baseline technical skills and soft skills needed to be successful in the position, and a pathway for progression.

The Junior Construction Field Coordinator Recruitment & Training Program, in partnership with EllisDon Corporation, provides job seekers with practical skills and on-the-job work experience to prepare them for work in the construction industry. Participants receive entry-level skills training, a paid job placement, and ongoing job retention support to ensure their long-term success working for leading construction employers and general contractors.



## Key Outcomes

- ✔ Helped meet key workforce needs for employers
- ✔ Opened up a promising career trajectory to a broader talent pool that otherwise may not have had access to a high demand role
- ✔ Created opportunity to scale the approach to other partners in the industry as well as other sectors.

## Learnings

- ✔ When recruiting for talent needs, organizations must think beyond the specific details of their current needs. By broadening their approach to recruiting, they can expand their suitable labour pool, whilst providing career mobility opportunities to workers in the industry
- ✔ There are several stakeholders in the ecosystem that are equipped to address talent needs. Sometimes it just requires approaching the right organization.

1 The Junior Construction Field Coordinator Recruitment & Training Program. The Career Foundation. <https://careerfoundation.com/programs/jr-construction>.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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