

Helping women explore trades and technology careers

by Heidi Riley

Introduction to Trades & Technology

Women represent less than five percent of trades workers on PEI. **Trade HERizons** is a new program which encourages more women to consider a career in trades and technology. The program will start in February.

“Jobs in trades and technology can be higher paying than traditional sales and service jobs,” says Project Manager **Sara Roach Lewis**. “This program is a way to help some women get a good job and help support their families.”

Employers also benefit

“Employers of skilled trades and technology workers are experiencing a labour shortage,” says Sara. “The shortage is projected to become greater and greater. We are trying to create a solution by encouraging more women to consider a career in this field.”

Trades and technology career choices

Trades careers include occupations such as automotive, carpentry, machinists, plumbing, electrical, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, and steamfitting/pipefitting.

Examples of technology careers include engineering, bioscience, construction, architectural, aircraft maintenance, and environmental technology.

How does the program work?

Trade HERizons is supported through a partnership between the province, Holland College, and Women’s Network. It is a 14-week career exploration program for women interested in exploring career options in trades or technology.

“Women’s Network will provide a wrap-around service for participants,” says Sara. “We will support them as they go through college training, and we will also help them connect with employers.”

After they complete Trade HERizons, participants may need to upgrade their academics before starting at Holland College in the fall.



Sara Roach Lewis is the Project Manager for Trade HERizons, a new program which introduces women to careers in trades and technology.

Barriers women face when considering going back to school

- child care
- transportation
- paying for training

This program will be provided at no cost to the participants. “Wherever possible, we will try to provide financial support for childcare and transportation,” says Sara. “Evidence shows that these are the supports women need to succeed.”

Program staff will talk to employers about the barriers women face when working in these occupations. “It’s pretty daunting to go into a male-dominated industry,” says Sara. “This program will help pave the way and break down some of the barriers women may experience.”

Program activities

Participants will look at their interests and work out what they want to do as they consider what works for them and their families.

They will visit welding shops and other trades and technology businesses. They will also go to Holland College training sites in Georgetown, Charlottetown, and Slemmon Park. “There will be lots of hands-on opportunities for women to find out if this is the career they want,” says Sara. “We will also focus on safety. It is a huge issue, especially for those who have not been exposed to trades jobs before.”

“This is a fantastic opportunity for women to explore their options. We don’t see a lot of women in those industries, so we tend to think those jobs are not something that women can do. And many employers tell us that they have never received an application from a woman. Work needs to be done on both sides to open people’s minds and let everyone know that women can do these jobs.”

Program details

Interviews for interested applicants will begin in November, and the program will start in February. The first session will accept 12 women and will be held in the Charlottetown area.

For more information, call **Sara Roach Lewis** at 368-5040 or e-mail sara@wnpei.org



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