

## Overview of the Development of the Workforce Strategy

The Surrey Board of Trade (SBOT), with the support of the BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (Ministry), undertook the Surrey Labour Market Priorities Project to determine Surrey's current and anticipated labour market demand, supply and gaps over the next ten years. The key output of the eight-month project was the development of a community-based strategy for partnering with employers and other stakeholders throughout Surrey to address priority labour market needs over the coming decade. The development of the Strategy was informed by comprehensive research conducted by Human Capital Strategies (HCS) from March to September 2019. SBOT and a Steering Committee comprised of Surrey business leaders provided guidance, review, support and promotion of both the research and the development of the Strategy.

## Strategic Context & Impetus for Action

Surrey is the second largest city in BC with a 2016 population of 518,000 residents. With the largest developable land base in the Mainland / Southwest (MSW) region, it is one of the fastest growing and most diverse communities in Canada, adding close to 10,000 residents annually since 2011. Surrey's population is projected to reach close to 650,000 by 2026 and 738,000 by 2036 – a growth rate of more than 2% annually over the next 20 years. Surrey will be BC's largest city within a decade. This growth and related workforce challenges were the impetus to develop this strategy.

## Research Objectives

Research conducted for this project identified the following challenges to the Surrey labour market:

1. **Attracting Talent** - Surrey is an attractive area to establish or relocate a business from higher cost centres, such as Vancouver, however, it is challenged in attracting the necessary talent across most industries, largely due to the increasing cost of housing and a lack of amenities needed to attract talent, particularly younger workers.
2. **Recruiting Talent** - Surrey's rapid growth has increased the competition for talent, and recruitment is particularly challenging in trades, technical and professional occupations.
3. **Retaining Talent** – Given low unemployment levels across the region, competition for talent is intense in Surrey and its surrounding municipalities. In-demand workers are often pursued by other companies offering better wage and benefit packages.
4. **The shortage of skilled labour** - For many employers, the lack of skilled labour in or near Surrey is a challenge. This is particularly true in skilled trades, technical positions, technology workers, and professionals such as qualified teachers, healthcare workers and engineers.
5. **The gap between labour supply and demand** - A gap or mismatch exists between people with the skills that employers need and can attract, and the skills and interest available in the Surrey labour force. This includes an information gap in which some Surrey employers and some workers do not know what is available and what is needed.
6. **Affordability of housing, transit, daycare, etc.** - Affordable housing, transportation, childcare and other supports were identified as significantly impacting the development of Surrey's workforce.
7. **Transit and parking issues** - Employers vary in terms of the extent to which transportation for workers is an issue for them. For some, it is a function of employer proximity to the SkyTrain and major bus routes, for others, it is the availability and accessibility of transit and the alignment with work schedules and shifts.
8. **The lack of a central 'Hub'** - While parts of Surrey, (e.g. Central City) are increasing residential and non-residential density and creating hubs for business and industry, Surrey as a whole lacks the necessary breadth and depth of residents, businesses and workforces to create critical mass of information-sharing, collaboration and a 'community' of practice and to attract other businesses and workers into Surrey.
9. **Lack of policies and programs to support the workforce** - Generally, stakeholders believe that all levels of government should provide more and innovative supports for workforce development in Surrey.

## The Surrey Labour Market Project Steering Committee

- Sunit Bector, Affinity Manufacturing
- David Bennet, Fortis BC
- Amrita Bhogal, Sunrise Kitchens
- Olivia Chang, Health and Technology District, Lark Group
- Grace Cleveland, South Surrey White Rock Chamber of Commerce
- Marlyn Graziano, Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- Anita Huberman, Surrey Board of Trade (Chair)
- Raj Hundal, Progressive Intercultural Community Services
- Azra Hussain, Surrey Hospital Foundation
- John Kearns, Sheraton Guildford Hotel
- Jennifer Kuenzig and Phil Swann, Douglas College
- Balraj Mann, BM Group of Companies
- Dan Reader, Murray Latta Progressive Machine (SBOT Board Member)
- Mark Sakai, Homebuilders' Association Vancouver
- Geoff Sale, Applied Science Technologists and Technicians of BC
- Patrick MacKenzie and Sangeeta Subramanian, Immigrant Employment Council of BC
- Dr. Greg Thomas, G3 Consulting (SBOT Board Member)
- Seema Tripathi, UNITI
- Ann Walsh, BC Landscape and Nursery Association
- Scott Wheatley, Cloverdale Chamber of Commerce

## Mission

To create strong employer-talent supply connections by leading, managing and engaging stakeholders and influencers in Surrey to achieve the vision, goals, strategic priorities and outcomes of the Made in Surrey Workforce Strategy.

## Vision

Surrey is a leader among communities in embracing the new economy and a new future of work to produce great outcomes. It is an opportunity city with the livable space and quality of life to enable a growing economy and businesses that attract and retain highly motivated talent who choose to live, work and play in their community.

## The Strategy

Informed by the research, the Steering Committee guided the project research team to develop a Made In Surrey Workforce Strategy. The following is an overview of the Strategy. **The full Strategy:** [businessinsurrey.com/business/surrey-labour-market-priorities/](https://businessinsurrey.com/business/surrey-labour-market-priorities/).

## Strategic Goals

The long-term strategic goals to be achieved by this Strategy are:

1. Surrey employers have access to talent and talent development capacity that produces the right competencies at the right time in the right place to support growth.
2. Surrey has a cohesive and coordinated world-class workforce development system involving responsive, flexible and innovative education, training and employment development programs, services and organizations.
3. Surrey businesses and other employers, and the workforce development system have the resources and data with which to make informed, evidence-based decisions on workforce priorities.
4. Surrey has the reputation, infrastructure, amenities, transportation, housing and services for families, workers and employers and the community at large.

## Strategic Priorities

The priorities of this Strategy are forward-looking and action oriented. The first four are directly related to workforce development and the last three foundational priorities support all elements of the workforce strategy.

### Priorities Directly Increasing Employer and Talent Capacity

1. **Attraction and retention of talent** – A major talent attraction and retention initiative is needed in Surrey. This will involve a Surrey-wide effort as well as by individual employers and sectors. This also involves better connections between education and industry. This includes developing a strong place-based reputation for Surrey among prospective talent.
2. **K-12 and PSE student preparation and retention and connections with industries and employers** – High school and post-secondary graduates need to enter the labour market with the skills and attributes employers need – soft skills, practical skills, exposure to the world of work, technology skills, etc.
3. **High quality job-specific, flexible, innovative skills development aligned with industry needs** – Employers, job seekers and employees in Surrey need better access to job-specific skills development to enter employment, advance in positions, respond to changing technology and retrain and transition, if necessary.
4. **Readiness and utilization of all talent pools** – The Surrey workforce is very diverse, and employers and the workforce development system need help and greater focus to tap into many talent pools. In many cases, employment readiness development is the first step and employers also must be ready to integrate a diversity of talent into their workplaces.

### Foundational Priorities

5. **Information and awareness for workforce decision-making** – The Strategy leadership and team, employers, sectors, workers, workforce development system proponents and others all need timely, accurate and reliable and disaggregated labour market data, intelligence and other information. This also includes creating awareness and sharing information on what resources and tools exist and about best practices in talent management, competency assessment, certification and credential recognition.
6. **Collaboration, coordination, cohesion and linkages** – There are many ways in which Surrey stakeholders and workforce system proponents need to better work together to achieve greater ROI from investments by taxpayers, employers, workers and others. This will also build capacity for employers and the workforce system to respond to talent priorities for growth. This also includes alignment among Surrey leaders, employers, workforce system proponents and others.
7. **Advocacy and influencing to obtain government, political leadership and community support for major improvements in Surrey to enable talent development** – Creating a Surrey Workforce Development Council to lead this Strategy and advocate for addressing the number of big issues (e.g. infrastructure, housing, transportation, amenities, etc.) that this Strategy in itself cannot tackle, but it can identify and advocate for improvement in and/or funding/resourcing of areas that affect workforce development.

# SURREY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT ECOSYSTEM



Central to this Strategy is the concept of a Surrey Workforce Development “Ecosystem”. In its simplest definition, an ecosystem is a complex network or interconnected system. This Strategy provides three types of “tools”: pre-employment, employment and post-employment workforce tools. These tools are wide-ranging and include programs, services, initiatives, resources, and expertise that will be used to facilitate the attraction, development and retention of talent in Surrey. These tools are influenced by and interdependent with community infrastructure and assets, which in turn are affected by major drivers within and outside of Surrey.

## Strategic Plan Implementation & Sustainability

Each of the seven priorities are supported by a number of tactics. In total, nearly 70 tactics are presented in the Strategy. A first step in the implementation of the Strategy is the formation of a Surrey Workforce Development Council. This council will work with various partners of the Surrey Workforce Development Ecosystem to prioritize, source funding and implement tactics. To become a member of the Council, please contact the Surrey Board of Trade. For more information and to read both the research report and the Made In Surrey Workforce Strategy:

[businessinsurrey.com/business/surrey-labour-market-priorities/](https://businessinsurrey.com/business/surrey-labour-market-priorities/)

### For More Information:

To find a full copy of the research report and the Surrey Workforce Strategy visit the Surrey Labour Market Priorities Project website at:

[businessinsurrey.com/business/surrey-labour-market-priorities/](https://businessinsurrey.com/business/surrey-labour-market-priorities/)

For more information or to become involved in the Surrey Workforce Strategy contact the Surrey Board of Trade:

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