



# HOW CANADA'S WORKFORCE APPROACHES DIGITAL SKILLS TRAINING

SUMMER 2022

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

Digital Marketing and digital focused industries are increasingly one of the most popular career choices amongst Canadians. To learn more about how digital training is being approached, with the growth of the industry in mind, The Digital Marketing Sector Council ran a survey, sponsored by Innovate BC, to gain data from 500+ participants across Canada. They surveyed companies ranging from solopreneurs to large businesses with over 500 employees.

## ABOUT THE DIGITAL MARKETING SECTOR COUNCIL

The Digital Marketing Sector Council is made up of over 2,100 stakeholders across Canada. These individuals are business owners, hiring managers and HR professionals, all with a vested interest in training and hiring qualified digital marketing professionals. On an annual basis, we survey these stakeholders to ensure we are listening to the industry when it comes to; skills gaps that exist, training expectations and availability for digital marketing job candidates, and retention practices for digital marketing professionals.



## **PURPOSE OF STUDY**

The objective of this study was to gather data surrounding the approach, requirements, and processes in digital jobs and training practices across Canada. The survey aimed to gather insights on whether marketing and tech professionals have access to effective digital marketing training, with a particular interest in available support and opportunities. Based on the data collected from the survey, the study provides valuable insights into the current state of digital marketing skills training, adoption, and planning across the country.

## **METHODS TO GATHER DATA**

To obtain the data, The Digital Marketing Sector Council surveyed over 500 participants in Canada's main industries including Digital Applications, Agriculture, Manufacturing, Retail, Food & Beverage, Financial Services, Clean Tech, Education, Advanced Health, Oil & Gas, Forestry, Mining, Marketing, Culture, Sports & Entertainment, Software & Computer Systems, Tourism, Transportation, NGOs, Interior Design, and Mortgage Brokerages.

The survey focused on the approaches to digital marketing training, funding opportunities across Canada, and future planning for digital marketing skilled employees. The questioning of this survey was designed to focus on the digital importance of staff in Canada's main industries, with a specific focus on the current status of digital training and education, and opportunities for staff.

## FINDINGS

- 97.44% of respondents actively provide access to digital marketing training resources for employees. Of this group, 39.74% said they provide partial funding to their employees to enroll in required training, 37.73% provide full funding to their employees to enroll in required training, and 22.53% said they offer no funding for their employees for training.
- Digital marketing training and development is provided by 40.84% of respondents through external programs, and 32.05% of respondents offer training through internally developed programs. The remaining 27.11% are expected to have training and digital developmental skills acquired before beginning their role.
- A majority of participants, 67.77%, stated that they were planning to introduce internal initiatives for digital marketing training in the near future.
- In terms of training or education level, it was found that 21.61% of participants were looking for the completion of a certificate program from a branded post-secondary institution. Another 17.40% stated that Microcredential certification from private programs would be sufficient in education when hiring for a digital marketing role, such as SEO, Digital Ads Management, and Social Media.
- When asked how the Federal Government could help those working in the digital marketing industry, respondents stated that government initiatives to implement policy guidance, promote standards and regulations would be beneficial.
- Participants suggested that in order to increase knowledge and learning among people in the community and jobs available to those with such certifications, continued government (Federal and Provincial) support for new programs and course certifications is critical.
- When asked about the most pressing issues facing Digital marketing, participants stated the challenges of navigating and educating themselves on the constantly changing and developing industry as a leading issue. Operational issues and data overload were also named ongoing issues.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Based on the results showing a majority of respondents planning on implementing in-house digital marketing training, employers should continue to seek non-dilutive sources of funding to promote digital skill training.
2. Business owners and hiring managers are encouraged to build a culture of continuous learning and upskilling by taking full advantage of funding opportunities, whether partially or entirely compensated, and encouraging in-house staff training through third party courses and microcredentials.
3. Business owners and hiring managers are encouraged to research funding opportunities available to their employees and encourage their completion of such programs, including the [Google Skills Workshop](#), and [Meta Blueprint](#).

## REPORT LIMITATIONS

A limited number of hiring professionals were surveyed across Canada, as a result, the data and findings are not exhaustive due to limited sample size.

## IMPLEMENTATION

In order to increase the number of digitally skilled professionals in the workforce, there needs to be greater understanding and access to available funding and educational opportunities. To better help those working in the digital marketing industry, there must be stricter policy guidance and better promotion of industry standards. By having these processes coordinated across stakeholders, hiring managers will be able to better implement training opportunities for current and future staff.

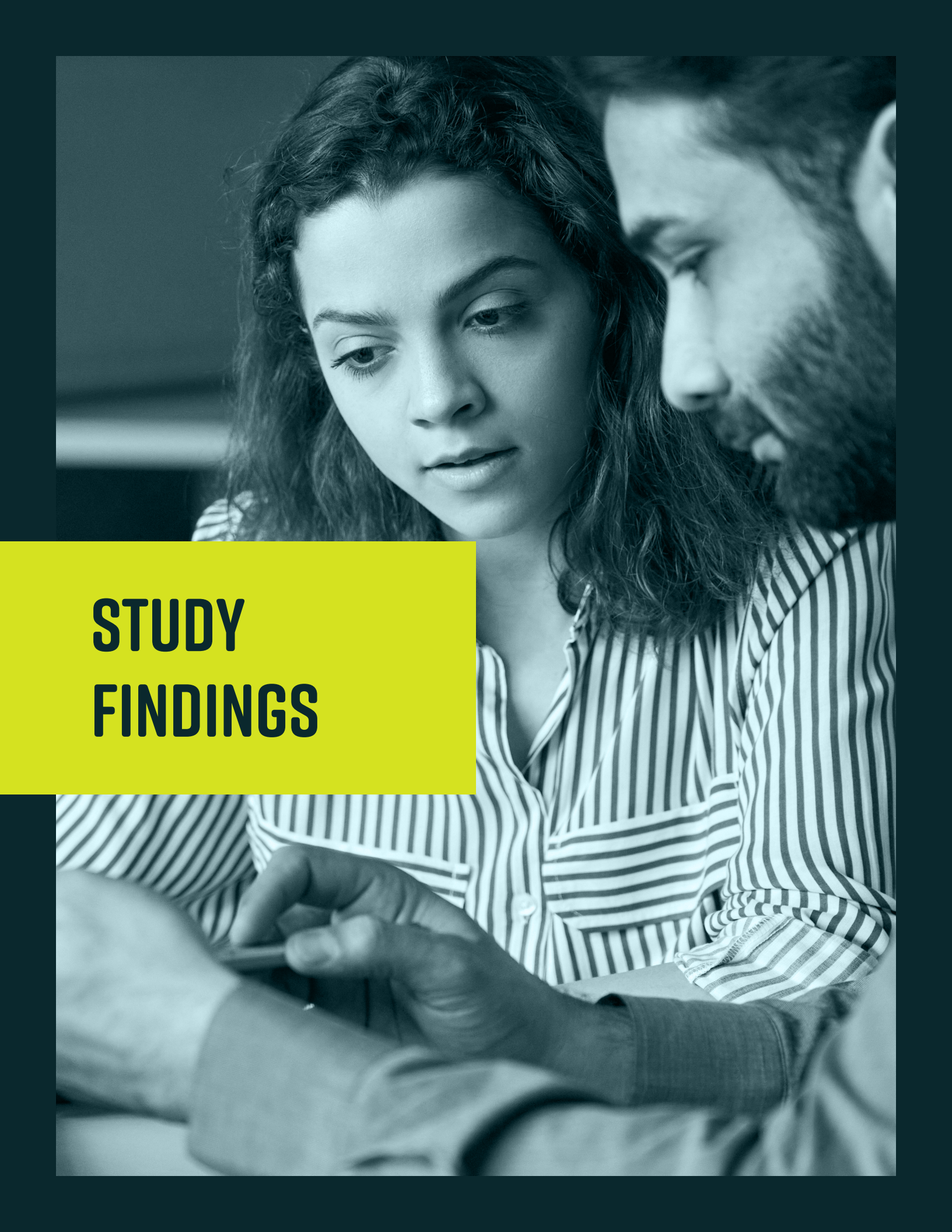
The majority of respondents were either interested in implementing digital marketing training, or already have an existing process that encourages in-house digital marketing training. By making this training more cohesive and accessible, we can better prepare digital marketing professionals for careers that will support all industries succeed in the digital age.

## CONCLUSION

The study provided insightful data into how hiring professionals are providing digital marketing training for new hires and current employees. The study highlighted some specific recommendations for stakeholders to continue to support the digital marketing workforce and hiring professionals in regards to digital marketing skills training and education within the surveyed industries. The data from this survey can be used to assist the implementation or consideration of opportunities and educational resources for the digital marketing industry, as well as better understand the types of credentials that hiring professionals are looking for.







**STUDY  
FINDINGS**

## DEFINITIONS

### DIGITAL MARKETING TRAINING

The process of learning new and strategic marketing practices to enhance a subject's (business, brand, organization, or individual's) online presence. I.e. Search Engine Optimization, Digital Ads Management, Social Media, Website Development and more.

## LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH

### DR. WENDY CUKIER, TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

"The Toronto Metropolitan University's Diversity Institute is pleased to express our support of The Digital Marketing Sector Council, sponsored by Innovate BC, in their research endeavors to determine how the past two years have impacted Canada's businesses when it comes to digital marketing training. As the host of the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (WEKH), and organizers of the Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT) program, we see this work from The Digital Marketing Sector Council as aligning with our research and program objectives.

As a key stakeholder in the digital marketing training industry, we understand the importance of gaining knowledge on the state of training and how this has been maintained, changed, or implemented in the past two years. This study will impact the Diversity Institute, by providing valuable data on what has been successful in digital training, and what can be improved upon. As the organizers of the Advanced Digital and Professional Training (ADaPT) programs, which focus on training students and recent graduates in the skills necessary to find the first step in employment, we are critically interested in the results of this data. Our programs rely on using connections with employers and building curriculums that include the skills those employers want and knowing what is successful in digital training.

Additionally, through our work on the Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub, we work to support and encourage diverse women entrepreneurs and business owners. One component of this work is to share best practices and resources to that community, and throughout the pandemic we have seen the necessity of businesses to pivot to digital platforms and digital marketing. We hope that this report will help expand our understanding of digital marketing training, especially for diverse business owners.

As a representative for the Diversity Institute, we are sincerely pleased that this research has been conducted. The completed study will bring greater awareness to the needs of employers hiring for digital marketing roles, and how both employers and job seekers can adapt to training demands. We will be hosting the completed study on our WEKH resources compendium and will look at ways

to incorporate its findings into our work. We support The Digital Marketing Sector Council and look forward to their continued research in the digital marketing training space.

Yours truly,"



***Dr. Wendy Cukier***

Founder and Director Diversity Institute,  
Ted Rogers School of Management  
Toronto Metropolitan University

## GAVIN BARRETT, BARRETT AND WELSH

"We are pleased to support the research of The Digital Marketing Sector Council, sponsored by Innovate BC, to determine how the past two years have impacted Canada's businesses when it comes to digital marketing training.

As a key stakeholder in the digital marketing training industry, we understand the importance of gaining knowledge on the state of training and how this has been maintained, changed, or implemented in the past two years. This study will give Barrett and Welsh and other organizations like us, valuable data on what has been successful in digital training and what can be improved.

As the founding partner at Barrett and Welsh, I can say that we are truly grateful that this research has been completed. It will bring greater awareness to the needs of employers hiring for digital marketing roles and how both employers and job seekers can adapt to training demands.

Sincerely,"



***Gavin Barrett***

Founding Partner and Chief Creative Officer,  
Barrett and Welsh

## SCOTT KNOX, INSITUTE OF CANADIAN AGENCIES

"I am pleased to support the research of The Digital Marketing Sector Council, sponsored by Innovate BC, to determine how the past two years have impacted Canada's businesses when it comes to digital marketing training.

As the Canadian association for the advertising, marketing, media and PR agency sector, a key stakeholder in the digital marketing, I understand the importance of gaining knowledge on the state of training and how this has been maintained, changed, or implemented. This study will impact the ICA's work within the industry by providing valuable data on what has been successful in digital training, and what can be improved upon.

I am pleased that this research has been conducted. The completed study will bring greater awareness to the needs of agencies hiring for digital marketing roles, and how both agencies and talent can adapt to training demands.

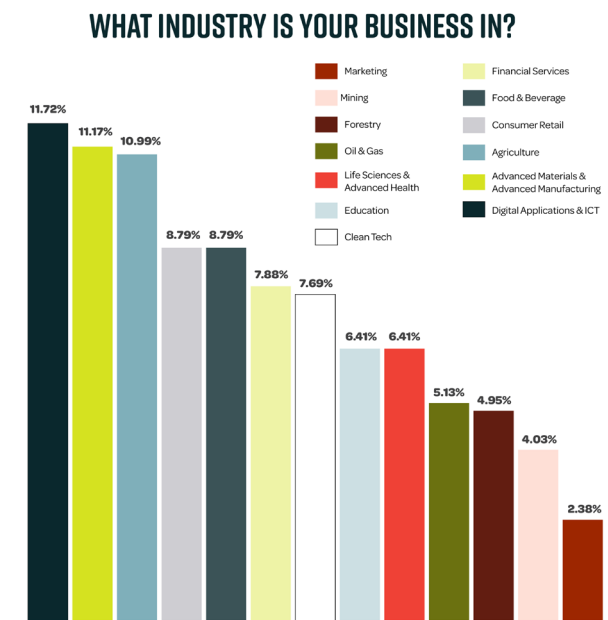
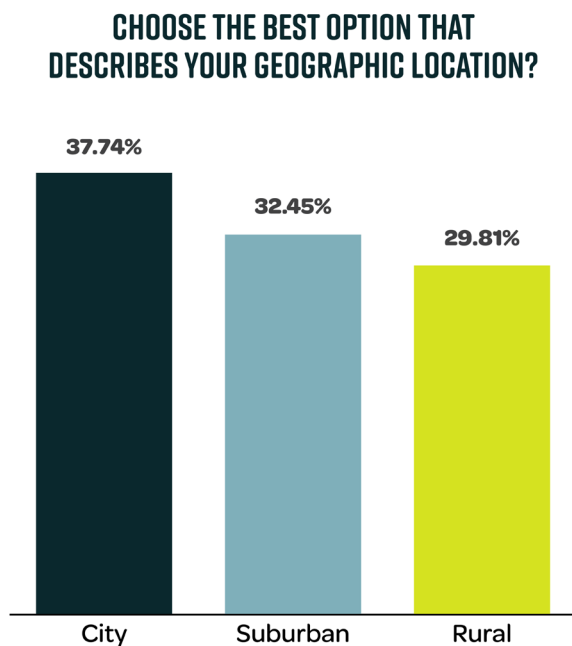
All the best,"



**Scott Knox**  
President & CEO  
Insitute of Canadian Agencies

## PARTICIPANTS BREAKDOWN

All survey respondents were located in Canada, with an almost equal split between city (37.7%), suburban (32.45%), and rural (29.81%) locations. Those who were surveyed came from a wide range of industries across the country with no dominating industry. Industries include Digital Applications & ICT (11.72%), Advanced Materials & Manufacturing (11.17%), Agriculture (10.99%), Consumer Retail (8.79%), Food & Beverage (8.79%), Financial Services (7.88%), Clean Tech (7.69%), Education (6.41%), Life Sciences & Advanced Health (6.41%), and many more under 5% of respondents include Oil & Gas, Forestry, Mining, Marketing, Culture, Sports & Entertainment, Software & Computer Systems, Tourism, Transportation, NGOs, Interior Design, and Mortgage Brokerage.



The respondents came from varying business sizes with 32.42% being small (25-99 employees), 26.2% micro (2-24 employees), 19.05% medium (100-499 employees), 17.77% large (500+ employees), and only 4.58% solopreneurs. The extensive range of the respondents allowed for a variety of results and showed similarities between industries for the same area of interest (digital skills training).

## THE CURRENT TRAINING LANDSCAPE

To get a better understanding of the survey respondent's existing digital training format, we asked the approximate percentage of participant's marketing employees who have digital marketing credentials. The highest given responses were 17.77% of respondents, who said about 20-30% of team members had credentials, 16.67% of respondents said 30-40% had credentials, and 15.93% said about 10-20% had credentials. Overall, the results displayed that most respondents had at least a portion of employees who have been trained with credentials to showcase.



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## IN-HOUSE TRAINING

To gather more information on the percentage of the respondents' employees who had credentials based on company training initiatives, we asked participants whether or not they provide training resources to their employees. 97.44% said yes, and only 2.56% said no. For digital training specifically, we asked how respondents are approaching the access to said training. 40.84% of respondents said they are providing access to external programs, 32.05% said they offer internal training, and 27.11% said they expect future employees to have training prior to starting their role. These results appear contradictory as only 2.56% said they aren't providing training resources to their employees, while 27.11% of respondents said they expect their employees to apply with existing training. Consequently, this section of results were deemed inconclusive.

To understand how funding for digital marketing training is approached, we asked respondents what level of financial coverage they offer to their employees for digital skills training; 39.74% said they provide partial funding to their employees to enroll in required training, 37.73% provide full funding to their employees to enroll in required training, and 22.53% said they offer no funding for their employees for training. This question provided interesting results as the above noted 97.44% offer digital marketing training, but 22.53% of those respondents don't offer any financial incentives to complete the training. We asked respondents what would encourage them to start offering digital marketing training at all to employees, if they aren't already, and 37.38% said access to information on the available training programs, 28.63% said access to funding, while the other 33.99% said they already offer training.

As there are existing funding opportunities for digital training such as [WorkBC](#), [Canadian Digital](#)

“

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[Adoption Program](#), [Digital Main Street](#), and more, we asked respondents if they are aware of these programs - 95.05% said yes, and only 4.95% said no. Those who answered no were asked if now that they're aware, whether they'd be interested in pursuing one of these funding opportunities - 97.25% said yes, and only 2.75% said no.

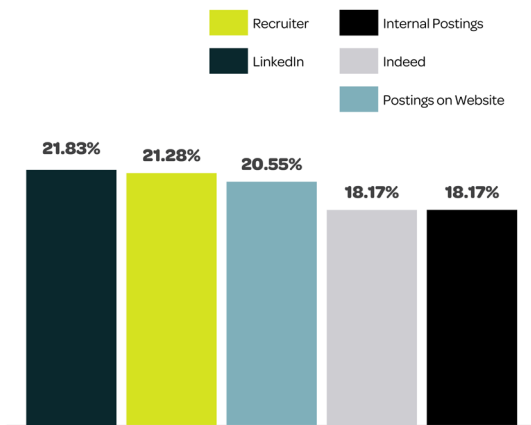
To get a deeper understanding of participants' preference on approaching training, we asked if they plan to create internal initiatives for digital marketing training in the future. 67.77% said yes they would be interested in creating their own internal initiative and 32.23% said no they would not.



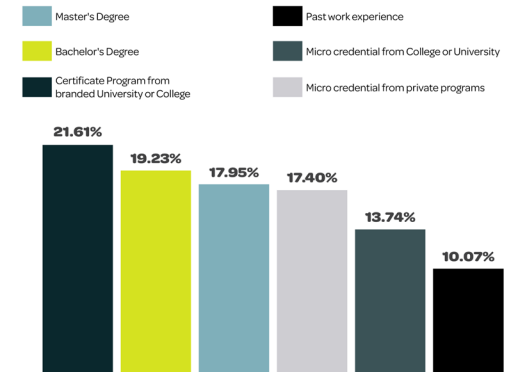
## HIRING AND TRAINING

To gather data on how the hiring process and how the digital training processes relate to one another, the survey posed questions on hiring for the respondents. When searching for hires, 21.83% said they primarily use LinkedIn, 21.28% said they primarily use a recruiter, 20.55% use career postings on their company website, 18.17% use Indeed, and 18.17% use internal postings.

**WHICH METHOD DO YOU PRIMARILY USE TO FIND DIGITAL MARKETERS TO HIRE?**



**WHAT LEVEL OF TRAINING OR EDUCATION IS MOST IMPORTANT IN YOUR THE HIRING DECISION FOR DIGITAL MARKETING ROLES (I.E. SEO, DIGITAL ADS MANAGEMENT, SOCIAL MEDIA, ETC)?**



When hiring for digital marketing roles, participants were asked what level of education was most important in their hiring decision, 21.61% said a certificate program from a university or college (i.e. UBC, Capilano, KPU, Langara, University of Toronto), 19.23% said Bachelor's Degree, 17.95% said Master's Degree, 17.4% said micro credentials from private programs (i.e. The Digital Marketing Sector Council, Brainstation, Meta Blueprint, Google Certifications), 13.74% said micro credential from college or university (i.e. BCIT, University Canada West, SFU, UFV etc), and 10.07% said they only look for past work experience.

To provide clarification on which micro credential programs were favourable for applicants to have, we asked respondents which micro credentials they recognize for digital marketing roles. 13.38% said Google Training certificates, 12.08% said a branded college offering credential programs, 11.39% said Digital Marketing Institute, 10.30% said BrainStation, 10.16% said Hootsuite Academy, and 9.61% said Meta Blueprint.

## IMPROVEMENTS TO BE MADE

We asked participants to share specific details on how digital skills training could be improved from their vantage point. When asked how the Canadian Government could assist those working in the Digital Marketing Industry, answers vary but primary answers included increasing funding for training and providing more policy guidance, and regulations when it comes to digital marketing training.

Respondents were asked what the most pressing issues the Federal Government should know about in regards to digital marketing. Some respondents noted that they believed the digital economy is becoming a huge growth point, and the government should continue supporting its development. Other answers included expressing that it is challenging being a small business owner and keeping up with digital demands, and others expressed there is a concern for operational issues and data overload.



## CONCLUSION

Once all results were gathered from this survey, there were no overarching or stand out data points; however, we were able to conclude that digital marketing and digital skills training is relevant for the Canadian businesses surveyed. While the majority of businesses surveyed either offered, or put an emphasis on, employee digital training, there wasn't a majority or unified consensus when it came to funding. With varying degrees of funding offerings from employers to employees, it is clear there isn't a standard within the Canadian workforce of what a company should be offering their employees when it comes to digital marketing training. A suggestion to address this would be increased education around the funding programs already available such as the Canadian Digital Adoption Program, so businesses are able to fund training for employees with financial assistance.



**With varying degrees of funding offerings from employers to employees, it is clear there isn't a standard within the Canadian workforce of what a company should be offering their employees when it comes to digital marketing training.**

As hiring digital experts proved to be relevant for the surveyed participants (i.e. expecting new hires to have micro credentials), standardization may be a beneficial step for digital specific skills and training. By having more regulated training offerings, and designated programs that are industry recognized, Canadian businesses and HR professionals can address hiring more cohesively and rate training similar to the traditional education system (Diploma, Bachelor's, Masters, PhD).

The study did provide valuable information to digital marketing professionals or those looking to enter the digital industry, in terms of what potential employers are searching for from new hires. Most employers in the industries surveyed are looking for some form of formal education, as well as having digital specific training from new employees, which can inform how new digital marketers intend to be trained before breaking into the industry.

Overall, this study found insightful results regarding digital training. Funding and regulation for digital programs will be two key points of emphasis. To achieve regulation, both Canada's businesses and governing bodies will need to put effort into standardizing the digital marketing industry's training. When it comes to funding demands, stakeholders should continue to allocate funding for digital training and bring education and awareness to these grants. The study's results clearly indicate that many of Canada's businesses are prioritizing digital training, and it is in a productive stage of growth.



# AVAILABLE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIGITAL SKILLS TRAINING

[ALBERTA DIGITAL TRACTION](#)

[BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT PROGRAM](#)

[CANADIAN DIGITAL ADOPTION PROGRAM](#)

[DIGITAL MANITOBA INITIATIVE](#)

[DIGITAL MAIN STREET](#)

[DIGITAL NOVA SCOTIA](#)

[ONTARIO GO DIGITAL](#)

[WORKBC](#)

# AVAILABLE TRAINING PROGRAMS

[BCIT - MARKETING MANAGEMENT DIPLOMA](#)

[BCIT - MICRO CREDENTIALING PROGRAMS](#)

[BRAINSTATION - MICRO CREDENTIALING PROGRAM](#)

[CONESTOGA COLLEGE - DIGITAL MARKETING MICRO CREDENTIAL](#)

[GOOGLE GROW CERTIFICATES](#)

[THE DIGITAL MARKETING SECTOR COUNCIL - MICRO CREDENTIALING PROGRAM](#)

[LIGHTHOUSE LABS - MICRO CREDENTIALING PROGRAM](#)

[META BLUEPRINT - DIGITAL MARKETING MICRO CREDENTIAL](#)

[SEMRUSH - MICRO CREDENTIALING PROGRAM](#)

[STENBERG COLLEGE - MARKETING DIPLOMA](#)

[TORONTO SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT - DIGITAL MARKETING DIPLOMA](#)

[UFV - DIGITAL MARKETING MICRO CREDENTIAL](#)

[UNIVERSITY CANADA WEST - SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING](#)

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## ABOUT INNOVATE BC

Innovate BC helps foster innovation in B.C. so that British Columbians in all regions of the province can benefit from a thriving, sustainable and inclusive innovation economy.

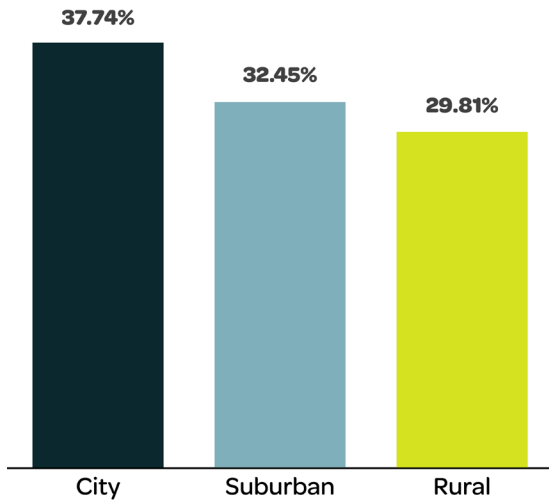
A Crown Agency of British Columbia, Innovate BC funds and delivers programs that support the growth of the B.C. economy by helping companies start and scale, train talent that meets labour market needs, and encourage technology development, commercialization and adoption.

Learn more about Innovate BC at [www.innovatebc.ca](http://www.innovatebc.ca)

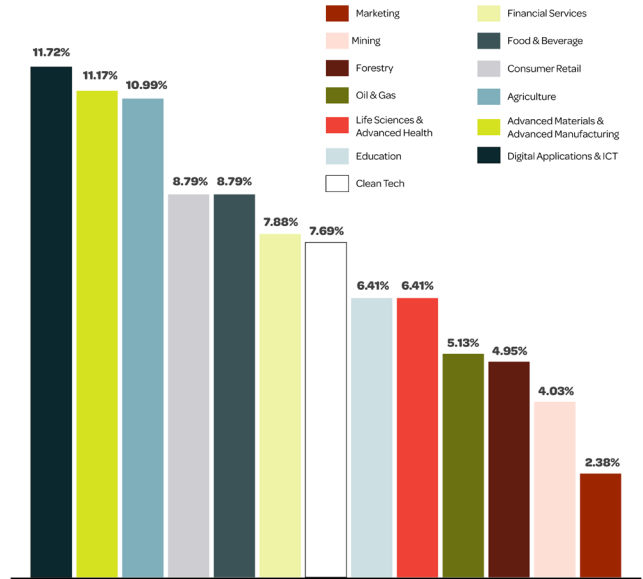


## APPENDIX A - SURVEY DATA INFOGRAPHICS

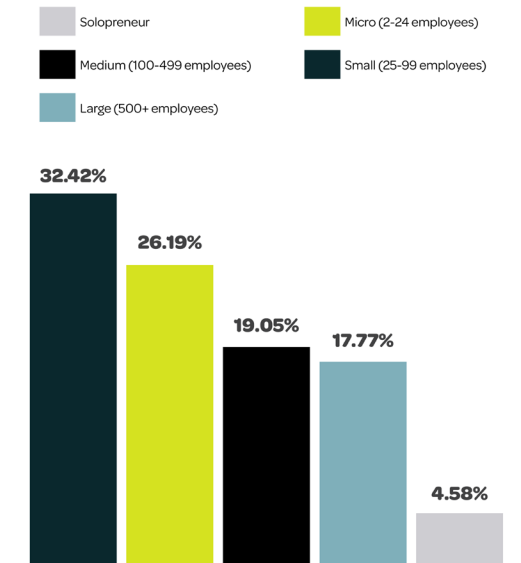
**CHOOSE THE BEST OPTION THAT DESCRIBES YOUR GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION?**



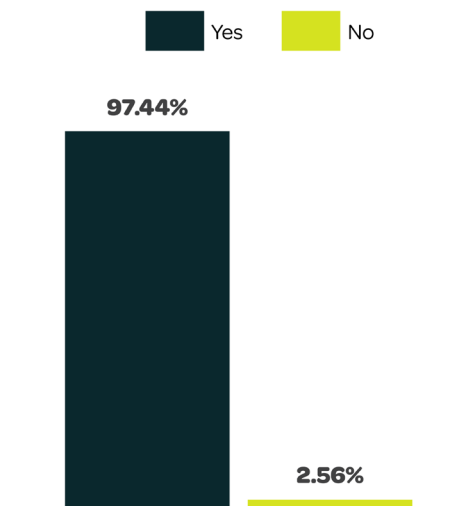
**WHAT INDUSTRY IS YOUR BUSINESS IN?**



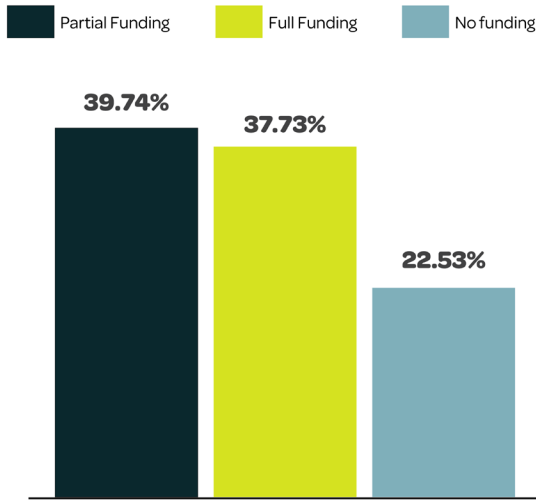
**WHAT SIZE IS YOUR COMPANY?**



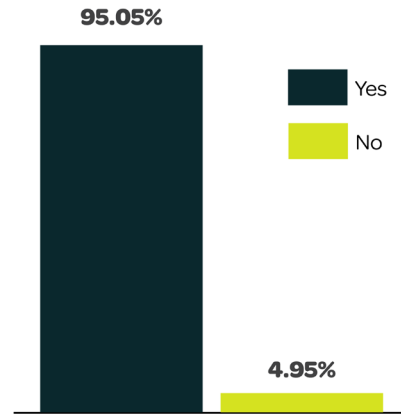
**DO YOU PROVIDE ACCESS TO MARKETING TRAINING RESOURCES FOR YOUR EMPLOYEES?**



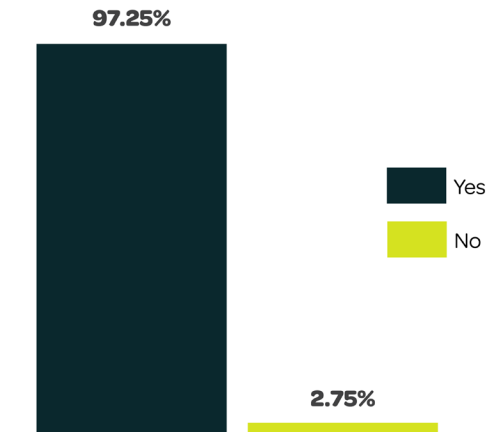
**WHAT DO YOUR DIGITAL MARKETING TRAINING INITIATIVES LOOK LIKE?**



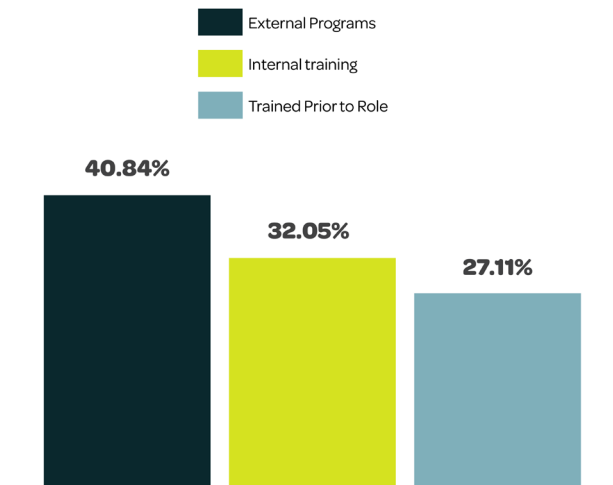
**ARE YOU AWARE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIGITAL MARKETING TRAINING? (I.E. INNOVATOR SKILLS INITIATIVE, WORKBC, CANADIAN DIGITAL ADOPTION PLAN, CANADA JOB GRANT, INNOVATE BC DIGITAL SKILLS FOR YOUTH ETC.)**



**IF YOU ANSWERED "NO" TO THE ABOVE QUESTION: NOW THAT YOU ARE AWARE, WOULD YOU BE INTERESTED IN USING THIS FUNDING FOR YOUR COMPANY TO SUPPORT TRAINING?**

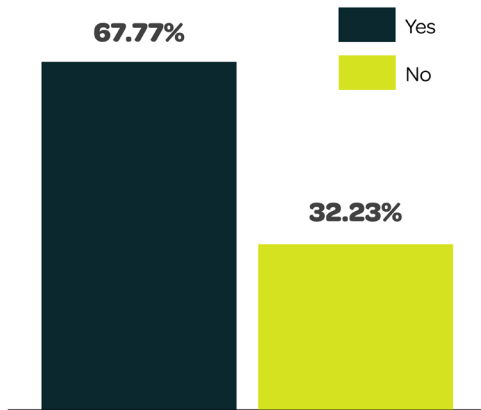


**HOW ARE YOU TRAINING YOUR EMPLOYEES FOR DIGITAL MARKETING ROLES?**

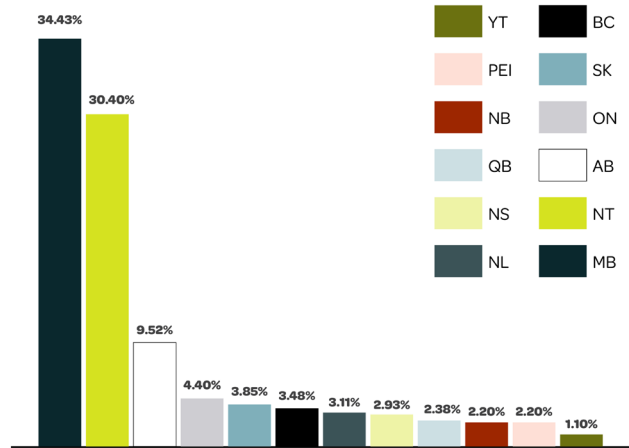




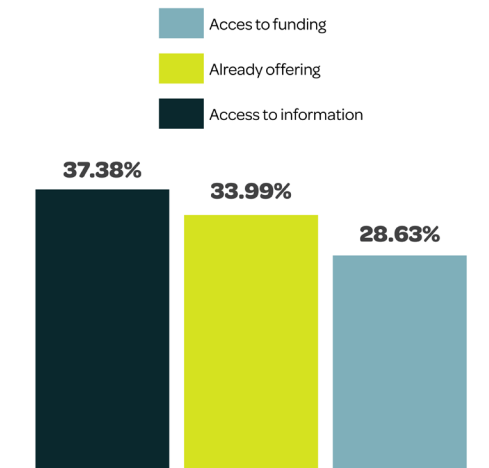
### DO YOU PLAN TO CREATE INTERNAL INITIATIVES FOR DIGITAL MARKETING TRAINING IN THE FUTURE?



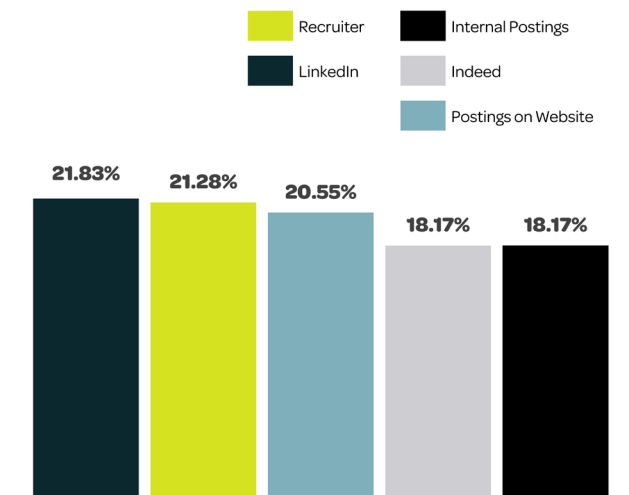
### WHICH PROVINCE OR TERRITORY DO YOU PRIMARILY FIND DIGITAL MARKETERS TO HIRE FROM?



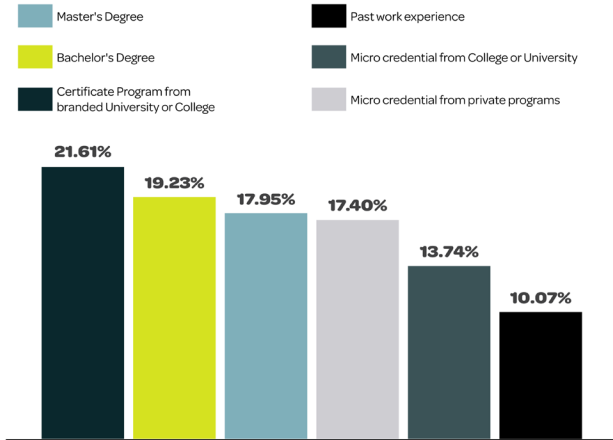
### WHAT WOULD DRIVE YOU TO START OFFERING DIGITAL MARKETING TRAINING FOR YOUR EMPLOYEES? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.)



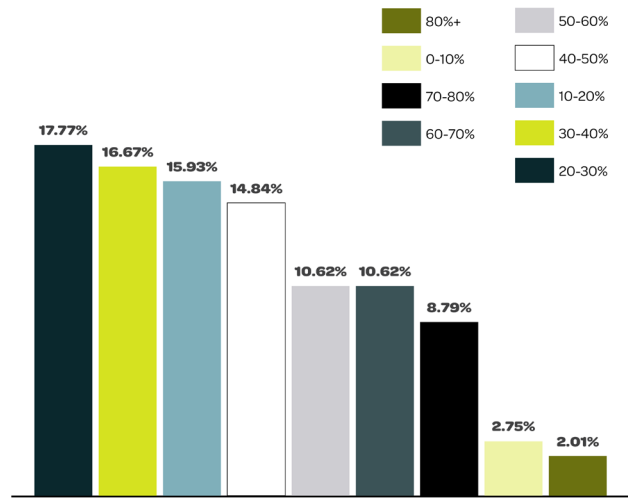
### WHICH METHOD DO YOU PRIMARILY USE TO FIND DIGITAL MARKETERS TO HIRE?



**WHAT LEVEL OF TRAINING OR EDUCATION IS MOST IMPORTANT IN YOUR THE HIRING DECISION FOR DIGITAL MARKETING ROLES (I.E. SEO, DIGITAL ADS MANAGEMENT, SOCIAL MEDIA, ETC)?**



**APPROXIMATELY, WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR TEAM HAS DIGITAL MARKETING CREDENTIALS?**



**WHICH CREDENTIALS DO YOU RECOGNIZE WHEN HIRING FOR DIGITAL MARKETING ROLES? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY.)**

