



From Job Site to Business Owner: Innovation Cluster Launches BuildUP Program for Skilled Trades Entrepreneurs

Innovation Cluster's New BuildUP program empowers tradespeople to take the leap into entrepreneurship and help bridge the skills gap.

PETERBOROUGH, ON – May 20, 2025—[Innovation Cluster - Peterborough and the Kawarthas](#) (Innovation Cluster) announced a new program, [BuildUP](#), specifically designed to help skilled trade workers with entrepreneurial zeal to get their businesses started. BuildUP is provided at no cost to accepted participants.

BuildUP's 8-week cohort program provides journeypersons, upper-year apprentices, and experienced tradespeople with the knowledge, tools, and connections needed to launch and manage their businesses. The Innovation Cluster offers two cohorts of twenty participants in 2025, with the first cohort beginning on June 24, 2025.

Led by industry experts and successful trades business owners, the curriculum covers setting up a business, tax basics, finding financing, customer service and reputation management, and hiring. The cohort will meet once a week for two hours in the evening, in-person and hybrid, at the Peterborough offices of the Innovation Cluster.

"The Innovation Cluster's Build Up program will provide much needed support for skilled tradespeople in Peterborough," said Rebecca Schillemat, Executive Officer of the [Peterborough and the Kawarthas Home Builders Association](#). "While many tradespeople excel in their craft, they often lack the foundational knowledge needed to launch and sustain a successful business. PKHBA is thrilled that this eight-week program equips trades professionals with the tools to thrive as business owners. The



addition of one-on-one mentorship from experienced trades experts offers invaluable, personalized support to help participants overcome real-world challenges and contribute to a stronger, locally driven economy.”

To support BuildUP participants with advice, mentoring, and connections, the Innovation Cluster has expanded its Experts in Residence (EXiR) program to include Trades Experts in Residence (TEiRs). Inaugural TEiRs include:

- Paul Bennett of Ashburnham Realty,
- Grant Conrad of WorkforceWins,
- Craig Mortlock of Mortlock Construction, and
- Hayden Mumford of Sparkies Electric.

Upon completing BuildUP, participating tradespeople will receive a certificate and a digital badge. More importantly, they will be ready to launch their business and start serving customers.

Summer 2025 Cohort

The inaugural 2025 cohort will begin on June 24, 2025, and will be offered free of charge to participants. The Innovation Cluster encourages all journeymen, upper-year apprentices, and experienced tradespeople to apply by June 15.

Eligibility Requirements

- Open to journeypersons, upper-year apprentices, and experienced tradespeople.
- Must reside in Ontario.
- Must be a company based in Ontario.



All interested and eligible businesses are encouraged to [apply online by June 15th, 2025](#).

This Employment Ontario program is funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario.

About the Innovation Cluster

The Innovation Cluster supports small and medium-sized enterprises in Clean Tech, Health & Medical Tech, AgriTech, the Nuclear Ecosystem, and Digital Tech. As a non-profit, we are dedicated to fueling regional innovation, entrepreneurship, and economic development in Peterborough and the Kawartha Lakes. Learn more at innovationcluster.ca.

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