

## Chapter 19

# Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission—Increasing Apprentices from Underrepresented Groups

### 1.0 MAIN POINTS

Saskatchewan will need over 6,000 new journeypersons by 2028 to meet employment demand and replace retiring workers.<sup>1</sup> In 2024–25, the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission reported 2,307 apprentices registered for training in Saskatchewan—below its target of 2,400.<sup>2</sup> Increasing the number of apprentices from underrepresented groups could help the Commission fulfill this need.

By February 2026, the Commission strengthened its processes to increase apprentices from underrepresented groups by addressing five of the seven recommendations we first made in 2023, but more work remains.

We found the Commission took several actions to advance equity and participation in the skilled trades. It encouraged designated trade organizations to nominate visible minority representatives to fill upcoming vacancies on the Commission’s Board of Directors, expanded supports through female journeyperson mentors and an Indigenous Apprenticeship Liaison, and connected with organizations supporting Black Canadians in Saskatchewan. It also gathered input from underrepresented apprentice groups to identify and address barriers (e.g., workplace sexual harassment/discrimination), as well as revised its apprentice survey to better collect barrier-related information. The Commission also revised its 2024–25 participation targets for female apprentices from 11% to 12% and from 5.5% to 10% for female apprentices in low-representation trades (e.g., crane operator).

The Commission still needs to:

- Set performance measures and targets to monitor key milestones (e.g., entry, duration, completion) for underrepresented groups in the apprenticeship program.
- Analyze and identify root causes for not meeting established targets for underrepresented groups and develop future action plans to address the gaps. In 2024–25, the Commission did not meet its participation targets for apprentices from underrepresented groups. For example, Indigenous apprentices’ participation rates remained at 17.2% compared to the Commission’s target of 19% and female apprentices participation rates were 10.1% compared to its target of 12%.

Effective processes to increase apprentices from underrepresented groups may help Saskatchewan to meet industry demand for skilled workers.

<sup>1</sup> Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission *Business Plan 2025–26*, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission *Annual Report 2024–25*, p. 10.



## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Background

The Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission is responsible for developing approaches in apprenticeship training and certification that support increased access, participation, and completion by members of underrepresented groups in skilled trades.<sup>3</sup>

Underrepresented groups include:

- Indigenous persons
- Visible minorities
- People with disabilities
- Women in underrepresented occupations (e.g., construction worker, electrician, plumber)

Underrepresented groups are groups of individuals whose participation rate in an apprenticeship program is less than the group's proportional representation of the Saskatchewan population.<sup>4</sup>

An apprentice takes part in apprenticeship training ranging from two to four years depending on the trade. Apprenticeship training is a structured system of supervised training, leading to certification as a journeyman in one of Saskatchewan's designated trades (e.g., construction electrician, carpenter, plumber), which are regulated by *The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission Regulations, 2020*.<sup>5,6</sup>

Apprentices spend approximately 85% of their time working on the job with an employer, obtaining knowledge and learning the skills associated with a trade from a certified journeyman. Apprentices spend the remaining time on theoretical and technical in-school training, which reinforces and expands on what they learn on the job. Technical training usually takes place at an institute (e.g., Saskatchewan Polytechnic) for a period of 6–10 weeks each year.<sup>7</sup>

The Commission is responsible to create a relevant, accessible, and responsive apprenticeship training and certification system to meet employers' and employees' needs and priorities.<sup>8</sup> It does not train individuals for potential jobs; rather, the Commission trains individuals for jobs they already have, with a few exceptions (e.g., hairstylist).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Act, 2019*, s. 13(d).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, s. 2.

<sup>5</sup> [www.saskapprenticeship.ca/what-is-apprenticeship/](http://www.saskapprenticeship.ca/what-is-apprenticeship/) (22 April 2026).

<sup>6</sup> A journeyman is an individual who worked at a trade for several years, passed all examinations, and received a Journeyman Certificate of Qualification from the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission or another Canadian apprenticeship authority. [www.saskapprenticeship.ca/experienced-workers/](http://www.saskapprenticeship.ca/experienced-workers/) (22 April 2026).

<sup>7</sup> [www.saskapprenticeship.ca/what-is-apprenticeship/](http://www.saskapprenticeship.ca/what-is-apprenticeship/) (22 April 2026).

<sup>8</sup> *The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Act, 2019*, s. 13(a).

<sup>9</sup> Unlike most apprentices, hairstylists attend technical training upfront before working in their trade or registering as an apprentice.

Of the Commission's 75 staff members, 31 staff are directly responsible for promoting apprenticeship and supporting apprentices from underrepresented groups in skilled trades.<sup>10</sup> For the year ended June 30, 2025, the Commission had revenue of \$29.6 million and expenses of \$31.4 million, with \$6.5 million spent on Commission salaries and personnel.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.2 Focus of Follow-Up Audit

This chapter describes our first follow-up audit of the Commission's actions on the recommendations we made in 2023.

We concluded, for the 12-month period ending June 30, 2023, Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission had effective processes to increase apprentices from underrepresented groups in skilled trades, except in the areas of our seven recommendations.<sup>12</sup>

To conduct this audit engagement, we followed the standards for assurance engagements published in the *CPA Canada Handbook—Assurance* (CSAE 3001). To evaluate the Commission's progress toward meeting our recommendations, we used the relevant criteria from the original audit. Commission management agreed with the criteria in the original audit.

To carry out our follow-up audit, we examined the Commission's plans, strategies, apprenticeship surveys, and reports relating to increasing apprentices from underrepresented groups in skilled trades. We interviewed Commission staff responsible for increasing apprentices from underrepresented groups in skilled trades. We assessed the Commission's processes for identifying barriers experienced by underrepresented groups in the trades and developing actions to address these barriers.

## 3.0 STATUS OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section sets out each recommendation including the date on which the Standing Committee on Public Accounts agreed to the recommendation, the status of the recommendation at February 28, 2026, and the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission's actions up to that date.

### 3.1 Visible Minority Board Representation Encouraged

***We recommended the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission pursue visible minority representation on its Board of Directors.*** (2023 Report – Volume 2, p. 141, Recommendation 1; Public Accounts Committee agreement January 20, 2026)

**Status**—Intent of Recommendation Met

<sup>10</sup> The 31 staff include all staff in Communications and Marketing, Innovation and Inclusion, and Apprenticeship Services Branches.

<sup>11</sup> Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission, *Annual Report 2024–25*, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup> *2023 Report – Volume 2, Chapter 15*, pp. 135–151.



In 2025, the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission encouraged designated organizations to nominate representatives from visible minorities to the Commission's Board of Directors. Although, the Commission's Board still does not have representation from visible minorities, the Commission neither nominates nor appoints members to its Board.

The Commission engages with key stakeholders (e.g., training institutions, employers, employees) through its industry-led Board, which can include up to 20 members. The majority of the Board members must be from industry, equally representing employers and employees.<sup>13</sup> Certain organizations (e.g., trade boards, employer organizations) for each industry sector (e.g., construction, automotive repair) are designated within the Regulations to nominate representatives to the Commission's Board.<sup>14</sup>

Since June 2025, the Commission's Board consisted of 20 members and one guest (non-voting) member with the terms of 10 industry representatives set to expire in July 2026. In October 2025, the Commission sent letters to the 39 representatives of the designated organizations encouraging them to consider visible minority representation when nominating candidates to the Board.

We found this approach reasonable because the Commission cannot nominate or appoint members to its Board.

Explicit representation from visible minorities would improve the Commission's awareness of unique barriers visible minorities face with apprenticeship. It can also foster a more inclusive perspective in developing strategies to increase participation from all underrepresented groups.

## 3.2 Barriers Identified Through Apprentice Input

***We recommended the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission sufficiently engage with apprentices from underrepresented groups to identify barriers and develop sufficient actions to address them.*** (2023 Report – Volume 2, p. 142, Recommendation 2; Public Accounts Committee agreement January 20, 2026)

**Status**—Implemented

The Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission engaged with apprentices from underrepresented groups to identify barriers they face and developed actions to address them.

The Commission continues to survey apprentices every two years, which includes gathering feedback on reasons for not completing an apprenticeship (e.g., training location, lack of on-the-job hours, financial). In 2025, the Commission made survey revisions to ask apprentices about barriers faced (e.g., travel, childcare, financial, workplace culture) when apprenticing in a Red Seal Trade, as well as provided sections for respondents to expand on their responses when they select “other” as a response.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Act, 2019*, s. 5.

<sup>14</sup> *The Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Regulations, 2020*, ss. 4 and 5.

<sup>15</sup> The Red Seal designation means a journey/trades person can practice their trade in any province or territory in Canada having demonstrated the knowledge required for the national standard in that trade. [www.red-seal.ca/eng/about/program.shtml](http://www.red-seal.ca/eng/about/program.shtml) (25 April 2026).

We found the Commission also took additional measures to identify barriers faced by apprentices in underrepresented groups such as:

- Implemented a new initiative in January 2024 aimed at attracting women to the skilled trades and helping them achieve their journey person certification.<sup>16</sup>

As part of this initiative, the Commission employed two female journey persons to mentor women apprentices. Through regular engagement with female apprentices, the mentors gathered information about barriers (e.g., unfair treatment, pay discrimination) facing female apprentices.

- Hired an Indigenous Apprenticeship Liaison in December 2025 to engage with Indigenous communities and interact with Indigenous apprentices to better understand their needs and barriers faced and to provide support.

The Commission also attended the Northern Labour Market Committee meeting in February 2024 where it discussed concerns with lower apprenticeship completion rates in northern Saskatchewan and apprentices having to leave their home community to attend training.<sup>17</sup> In 2025, a Northern Apprenticeship Subcommittee was established to improve apprenticeship participation and completion in the north, with a Commission representative on this subcommittee.

- Engaged with groups in the Black community to increase participation in the skilled trades by gathering information on experiences and the needs of Black Canadians. For example, the Commission delivered a presentation on apprenticeship to the Black Professionals and Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan, as well as attended an event of the Coalition of Black Small & Medium Enterprises.

Gathering information about barriers from apprentices, including those from underrepresented groups, can assist the Commission in creating effective actions to attract and improve the apprenticeship experience for these groups.

### 3.3 Actions Taken to Address Key Barriers

***We recommended the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission establish appropriate actions to address all key identified barriers faced by underrepresented groups.*** (2023 Report – Volume 2, p. 144, Recommendation 3; Public Accounts Committee agreement January 20, 2026)

**Status**—Implemented

The Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission established actions to address key barriers identified.

<sup>16</sup> The initiative is funded in part by the Government of Canada's Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy through the Women in Skilled Trades Program. Federal funding for the program ends June 2026.

<sup>17</sup> The Northern Labour Market Committee is a collaborative network of agencies dedicated to addressing labour market challenges and ensuring that northern Saskatchewan residents benefit from economic development in their region. [www.kcda.ca/northern-labour-market-committee/](http://www.kcda.ca/northern-labour-market-committee/) (25 April 2026).



In our 2023 audit, we identified three barriers faced by underrepresented groups the Commission did not have an action plan or initiatives to address. As shown in **Figure 1**, we found the Commission has since taken action to address these barriers.

**Figure 1—Barriers Not Addressed from Original Audit and Actions/Initiatives Taken**

| Barrier and Underrepresented Group Affected   | Established Actions/Initiatives to Address Barrier  |
|---|---|
| Sexual discrimination/harassment in the workplace (Women)   | The Commission implemented a Respectful Workplace Statement for Employers within contract terms and conditions between apprentices and employers.<br>The Commission offered diversity and inclusion training for employers. The training initiative was discontinued by the Commission due to low participation; however, this training is still available to interested employers. |
| Childcare responsibilities (Women)  | Female mentors (discussed in <b>Section 3.2</b> ) met with female apprentices and provided coaching and mentoring. Mentors may encourage apprentices to discuss childcare concerns with employers.  |
| Lack of data and information on experiences of Black Canadians in the skilled trades (Visible Minorities) | Commission representatives engaged with organizations supporting Black Canadians (e.g., Black Professionals and Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan, Coalition of Black Small & Medium Enterprises).  |

Source: Adapted from Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission records.

As discussed in **Section 3.2**, we found the Commission undertook some new initiatives that helped to identify additional barriers faced by apprentices, including apprentices from underrepresented groups. For example, two survey respondents noted hearing impairment as a barrier. The Commission’s Educational Psychologist assesses apprentices who self-identify as having a disability and helps determine appropriate accommodations for training to address barriers.

The Commission has not yet had specific discussions with industry associations about the barriers identified by apprentices. Raising awareness among employers about the challenges apprentices from underrepresented groups face may help to improve the work environment for these apprentices and attract more people to the skilled trades. The Commission indicated it plans to share information about barriers at a future trade board meeting.

Taking steps to address the known barriers that underrepresented groups experience can lead to increased access, participation, and completion of apprenticeship by members of underrepresented groups.

### 3.4 Innovation and Inclusion Strategies Underway

*We recommended the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission enhance and implement its Innovation and Inclusion Strategy to increase underrepresented groups in the skilled trades.* (2023 Report – Volume 2, p. 145, Recommendation 4; Public Accounts Committee agreement January 20, 2026)

**Status—Intent of Recommendation Met**

The Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission plans to no longer maintain a separate Innovation and Inclusion Strategy but is incorporating innovation and

inclusion strategies within other strategic planning documents (e.g., business plan) and initiatives to increase underrepresented groups in the skilled trades.

The Commission's current five-year strategic plan expires in 2027, and includes goals and objectives related to apprentices from underrepresented groups. Management noted consultations with key stakeholders will begin in 2026, and expects to make revisions to innovation and inclusion strategies within the Commission's business and work plans.

The Commission indicated the Innovation and Inclusion Strategy informed strategies for its annual business plan and workplans of its nine Innovation and Inclusion Branch staff. These staff develop, assess, and apply innovative methods to strengthen apprenticeship training and promote participation, progression, and completion among underrepresented groups in the skilled trades.

We reviewed the Commission's 2025–26 Business Plan, Communications Plan, and the Director of Innovation and Inclusion's Workplan for the same period and found the Commission:

- Incorporated language aligned with good practice such as referring to “equity groups/equity priority groups/equity diversity groups” rather than underrepresented groups.<sup>18</sup> The Commission should consider defining these groups within the document to provide clarity for the reader and help build a shared understanding.
- Identified employers, youth, and equity priority groups as stakeholders in its 2025–26 strategic planning documents (Business Plan and Communications Plan) and defined marketing strategies and tactics directed at each group (e.g., feature women and Indigenous apprentices in Commission advertising).
- Tasked its Director of Innovation and Inclusion to develop new partnerships (e.g., with Street Culture Project, a community group in Regina focused on underserved youth) to increase awareness of apprenticeship.

We also found the Commission communicated expectations to external stakeholders (e.g., employers) for increasing apprentices from underrepresented groups through new initiatives. For example, the Commission implemented a Respectful Workplace Statement for Employers within contract terms and conditions between each apprentice and employer. This helps ensure employers are aware of and accept responsibility for their part in supporting an inclusive workplace for all apprentices.

### 3.5 Revised Targets Set for Female Apprentices

***We recommended the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission revise its targets for female apprentices to promote greater provincial representation of women in the skilled trades.***

*(2023 Report – Volume 2, p. 148, Recommendation 5; Public Accounts Committee agreement January 20, 2026)*

**Status—Implemented**

<sup>18</sup> Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission uses the term ‘equity group’ to denote an underrepresented group. [www.saskhrc.ca/employment-equity-targets/](http://www.saskhrc.ca/employment-equity-targets/) (18 April 2026).



The Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission revised its targets for female apprentices to promote greater provincial representation of women in the skilled trades.

The Commission reviews, and its Board approves, targets for underrepresented groups annually. In 2024–25, the Commission increased the participation targets for female apprentices from 11% to 12% and for female apprentices in trades with low representation (e.g., crane operators) from 5.5% to 10%. The Commission did not meet these revised targets in 2024–25—see results in **Figure 3**.

We found the revised targets for female apprentices set by the Commission reasonably align with national statistics and strategies regarding female apprentices in Canada. For example, Statistics Canada reported that in 2024 females represented 10.9% of certified apprentices in Canada.<sup>19</sup> In addition, a task force led by the Canadian Apprenticeship Forum established a national target to increase participation and retention of women in skilled trade careers to 15% by 2030.<sup>20</sup>

Establishing targets that promote greater provincial representation of women in the skilled trades, especially trades with low female representation can help meet industry demand for skilled trades in the province.

### 3.6 Targets Not Yet Established for Key Milestones in Apprenticeship Program

---

***We recommended the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission expand its performance measures and targets for underrepresented groups to include all key milestones (e.g., entry, duration, completion) in the apprenticeship program. (2023 Report – Volume 2, p. 149, Recommendation 6; Public Accounts Committee agreement January 20, 2026)***

**Status**—Partially Implemented

The Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission has not set performance measures and targets to monitor key milestones for underrepresented groups in the apprenticeship program; however, it has begun to develop tools to do so.

The Commission tracks progression data for all apprentices, including those from underrepresented groups in its IT system (myATC).<sup>21</sup> It started to develop a dashboard to track progression and completion rates for underrepresented groups specifically. The dashboard showed that apprentices who passed their first level of technical training on their first attempt were more likely to advance to the next level of training and become a journey person.

---

<sup>19</sup> [www150.statcan.gc.ca](http://www150.statcan.gc.ca) (22 April 2026).

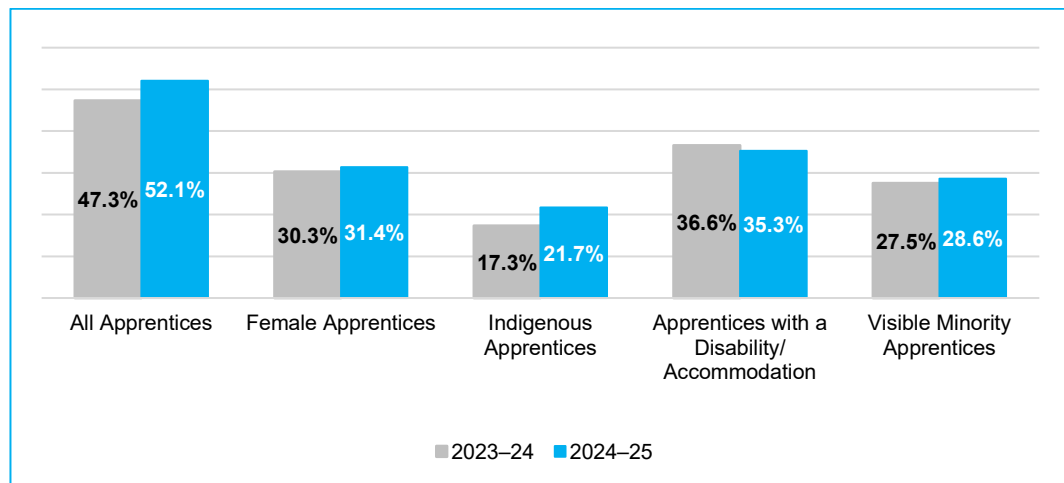
<sup>20</sup> Canadian Apprenticeship Forum. (2020). *National Strategy for Supporting Women in the Trades*, p.7.

<sup>21</sup> MyATC is the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission's information technology system for apprentices to register for technical training and exams, submit trade hours, and update personal information. Apprentice employers also use myATC to track and approve apprenticeship trade hours. [saskapprenticeship.ca/myatc](http://saskapprenticeship.ca/myatc) (22 April 2026).

The Commission measures and reports on the Real Completion Rate for all apprentices (see **Section 3.7**). The Real Completion Rate measures apprentices who have achieved journeyman status within two years of the expected end of their program.

We found the Commission provided senior management analysis on Real Completion Rates in July 2025 and to its Board in September 2025. As shown in **Figure 2**, the Real Completion Rate for apprentices from underrepresented groups is significantly lower than the rate for all apprentices, highlighting difficulties experienced by these groups. For example, in 2024–25, approximately 28% of visible minority apprentices completed the apprenticeship program compared to 52% of apprentices overall.

**Figure 2—Real Completion Rates of Apprentices for 2023–24 and 2024–25**



Source: Adapted from Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Certification Commission records.

To better understand the difficulties experienced by apprentices from underrepresented groups, the Commission could consider setting targets and analyzing results such as:

- Percentage of underrepresented apprentices who successfully complete each year of apprenticeship (i.e., as apprentices progress in training)
- Number of Certificates of Apprenticeship Completion issued
- Number of exam completions (i.e., tracking pass/fail and the number of exam retakes)
- Number of years for each of the underrepresented groups to complete their program

The Commission plans to establish internal targets to monitor progression and completion rates for underrepresented groups by June 2027.

Not having performance measures and targets for underrepresented groups at key points in the apprenticeship program (e.g., registration, progression through levels, completion) can limit the Commission's ability to identify and mitigate issues faced by different underrepresented groups.



### 3.7 Formal Analysis on Underachieving Targets Needed

***We recommended the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission formalize its analysis of reasons for not meeting established targets for underrepresented groups, and planned actions to address.*** (2023 Report – Volume 2, p. 150, Recommendation 7; Public Accounts Committee agreement January 20, 2026)

**Status**—Not Implemented

The Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission does not adequately analyze and identify root causes for not meeting established targets for underrepresented groups and does not identify future action plans to address the gaps.

The Commission reports monthly on results compared to targets for underrepresented apprentice groups (e.g., female, visible minority, person with disability, Indigenous) to senior management and its Board. Key measures and targets regarding apprentice participation and program completion are shown in **Figure 3**. In 2024–25, the Commission did not meet these performance targets. For example, Indigenous apprentices' participation rate was 17.2% compared to the Commission's target of 19% and female apprentices participation rate was 10.1% compared to its target of 12%.

**Figure 3—Participation Rate for Apprentices from Underrepresented Groups and Real Completion Rate from 2022–25**

|   | 2022–23     |             | 2023–24     |             | 2024–25     |             |
|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|   | Target (%)  | Actual (%)  | Target (%)  | Actual (%)  | Target (%)  | Actual (%)  |
| <b>Participation</b>  |             |             |             |             |             |             |
| Indigenous Apprentices                                      | 18.0        | 17.4        | 19.0        | 17.1        | 19.0        | 17.2        |
| Female Apprentices  | 11.0        | 10.7        | 12.0        | 9.9         | 12.0        | 10.1        |
| Female Apprentices in Trades with Low Female Representation | 5.5         | 6.6         | 10.0        | 7.1         | 10.0        | 6.9         |
| Visible Minority Apprentices                                | 4.5         | 6.7         | 10.0        | 7.8         | 10.0        | 8.7         |
| Apprentices with Disabilities                               | 7.0         | 9.5         | 13.0        | 10.9        | 13.0        | 12.0        |
| <b>Real Completion Rate</b>                                 | <b>60.0</b> | <b>52.2</b> | <b>60.0</b> | <b>47.3</b> | <b>60.0</b> | <b>52.1</b> |

Source: Adapted from Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Certification Commission records.

We reviewed two reports provided to the Commission's senior management and found they included actual results compared to established targets. However, the Commission's reports did not identify root causes where targets were not met or outline what future actions would be undertaken to try to achieve them. As outlined in **Section 3.6**, the Commission setting out additional performance measures for key milestones should also help it understand where completion rates are lower for underrepresented groups and identify further initiatives necessary to improve them.